GARDENING for BUTTERFLIES in New England

TO ATTRACTION THE MOST BUTTERFLIES TO YOUR GARDEN, PLANT BOTH NECTAR FLOWERS AND CATERPILLAR FOOD PLANTS

MY “TOP FIFTEEN” NECTAR PLANTS

Butterfly Bush* (Buddleia davidii. B. alternifolia is also good.)
Zinnias (tall, flat-topped varieties e.g. ‘State Farm’, ‘Cut & Come Again’, Carrousell. “Profusion” is okay. NOT pompoms.)
Marigolds (Tagetes spp.) (Taller, single varieties; NOT pompoms.)
Milkwes: Swamp Milweed (Aesclepias incarnata), Butterfly Weed (A. tuberosa), and Common Milkweed (A. syriaca - aggressive).
New England Aster (A. novae-angliae), and most other asters.
Scabiosa* (‘Butterfly Blue’ lives up to its name.)
Purple Coneflower (and other Echinacea spp.)
New Jersey Tea (Ceanothus americanus)
Sweet Pepperbush (Clethra alnifolia) (all varieties)
Gayfeather (Liatris spp.) (L. ligulistylis, pycnostachya, koboldii, etc.)
Coreopsis spp. (Even ‘Moonbeam’ works for me)
Joe-Pye Weed (Eupatorium spp. – all varieties)
Cupplant or Compass Plant (Silphium spp.)
Mexican sunflower (Tithonia) (excellent in late summer)
Verbena: V. bonariensis in late summer and fall. Other verbenas okay.

ALSO GOOD: Chives (and other Allium spp.); Senecio aureus (wetland native for early bloom); Bee balm (Monarda); Thyme; Catmint* (Nepeta); Black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia);
Privet**; Dandelions**; Phlox; Centranthus*; Valerian*; Dogbane (caution: aggressive); vetch; thistles; Mountain-Mint (Pycnanthemum spp.); Mint (Mentha spp.) (caution: aggressive); Lilacs*; Cosmos; Sedums; Helium; Blackberry; Raspberry; Lavender*; Galliardia; Red Clover*; Birds-foot Trefoil**; Button-bush (Cephalanthus); Black Cohosh (Cimifuga racemosa); Bidens (especially Bidens alba, which is annual in our climate);
Lantana (not hardy); Pentas* (not hardy). For Moths: Oenothera spp.; Nicotiana spp.

*not native to the Americas, but well-behaved in our area **not native, may be aggressive

SOURCES FOR PLANTS AND SEEDS: Prairie Nursery; Prairie Moon Nursery
www.prairiemoonnursery.com; Select Seeds www.selectseeds.com; New England Wild
Flower Society www.newfs.org; Churchill Nursery, Exeter, NH; Russell’s Garden Center, Sudbury, MA; Bigelow Nurseries, Northboro, MA; Sunlight Gardens, TN; Johnnies Selected Seeds, Winslow, ME; and many others.

ESSENTIAL LARVAL FOOD PLANTS FOR YOUR GARDEN

**Red Admiral**: Nettles (*Urtica dioica**), False Nettle (*Boehmeria cylindrica*), Hops (*Humulus lupulus*)

**American Lady**: Pussytoes (*Antennaria*- all species); Pearly Everlasting (*Anaphalis margaritacea*); Cudweed (*Gnaphalium obtusifolium*, etc.); Globe Thistle (*Echinops ritro*).

**Black Swallowtail**: Dill (*Anethum graveolens*); Queen Anne’s Lace (*Daucus carota**); Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare**); Parsley (*Petroselinum*); Lovage (*Levisticum officinale*); Scotch Lovage (*Ligusticum scoticum*); Rue (*Ruta graveolens*).

**Spicebush Swallowtail**: Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*); Sassafras

**Monarch**: Milkweeds (*Asclepias spp*) all, but especially Common Milkweed

**Sulphurs**, **Eastern Tailed-Blue**: Alfalfa*; Clovers*; Lespedeza, Desmodium, Lathyrus

**Baltimore Checkerspot**: Turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*); Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*)

**Pipevine Swallowtail**: Dutchman’s Pipe (*Aristolochia durior*)

**Pearl Crescent**: Asters; *Fritillaries*: Violets

**Silver-spotted Skipper**: Black locust (*Robinia*) (very aggressive); Honey locust (*Gleditsia*); Groundnut (*Apios americana*) (aggressive, but not as much as *Robinia*).

**Viceroy**: Poplars and Willows

**Mourning Cloak**: Willows

**Red-spotted Purple**: Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*); poplars, birches, willows

**Eastern Comma**; **Question Mark**; **Milbert’s Tortoiseshell**: Stinging Nettles; Hops; Elms

**American Copper**: Sorrel, Dock (*Rumex spp.*)**

**Spring/Summer Azure**: Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*); *Spirea*; *Vaccinium*

**Least and Peck’s Skippers**: Grasses: *Poa spp.*; *Panicum* spp.

**Crossline, Cobweb, and Dusted Skippers**: Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparius*)

**BUTTERFLY RESOURCES**


Massachusetts Butterfly Club  www.massbutterflies.org  In-state photographs of all species, membership information, field trips, checklists, guide to good field sites.


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