Maintaining a Butterfly Garden

- Do not use pesticides in your garden. They will kill your butterflies. Use a strong jet of water or hand pick other garden pests.
- Choose natural organic or slow-release fertilizers with a low phosphorous level for fertilizing your plants.
- Mulch at least 3-4 inches deep to decrease weeds, but stay 4-12 inches from the stems to prevent stem rot.

For more information, visit: http://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/broward/urban-horticulture-and-natural-resources/

Email: Broward MG@ifas.ufl.edu with your butterfly questions.

The Life Cycle of the Butterfly

Butterflies pass through several very different stages during their life cycle, a process called metamorphosis. The life span varies from a few days to a few months. However, the over-wintering Monarch is known to live for an average of 8 months. The longest lived butterfly in Broward County is the Zebra Longwing. Unlike other parts of the United States, butterflies in Broward County typically have continuous generations. The peak seasons for butterflies are spring, early summer, and fall. During the fall, Broward County witnesses its greatest abundance of butterflies, both migratory and resident.

Adult (Monarch Danaus plexippus)

Life span for a butterfly is 5 days to 6 months

Egg

Egg takes from 5 to 10 days to hatch

Chrysalis

Chrysalis stage lasts 10 to 15 days

Larva or Caterpillar

Larva grows from 2 to 4 weeks before pupation into a chrysalis

Butterfly Facts

More than 725 species of butterflies are found in North America. Approximately 83 are found in Broward County. Broward butterflies range in size from as small as just under 1/2 inch for the Amethyst Hairstreak to as large as the 5.5-inch Giant Swallowtail. Butterfly feet possess a sense of taste. When the feet come in contact with nectar, the straw-like mouth, called the proboscis, uncoils. Butterfly wings are covered with colorful overlapping scales which are mainly used for protection. These scales can also be modified to release an odor for females to attract males for mating and can also be faceted to refract light, creating iridescent hues. The time from egg-laying to emergence of the adult butterfly varies from 29 to 53 days. Adult butterflies do not chew leaves, bite or carry diseases.

Attracting Butterflies to Your Yard

Nectar flowers will bring butterflies to your yard to feed and are not harmed by the adult butterflies. Planting a food source for the caterpillars, which serve as host plants for larvae, will attract butterflies to your yard throughout their life cycle. The larval host plants are meant to be eaten by butterfly caterpillars. Native plants are a good choice for attracting butterflies. The plants provide the nectar, and the butterflies pollinate the plants when they come to feed on the nectar.

Broward’s Butterflies

Unlike other parts of the United States, butterflies in Broward County typically have continuous generations. The peak seasons for butterflies are spring, early summer, and fall. During the fall, Broward County witnesses its greatest abundance of butterflies, both migratory and resident.

Adult (Monarch Danaus plexippus)

Life span for a butterfly is 5 days to 6 months

Egg

Egg takes from 5 to 10 days to hatch

Chrysalis

Chrysalis stage lasts 10 to 15 days

Larva or Caterpillar

Larva grows from 2 to 4 weeks before pupation into a chrysalis

Butterfly Facts

More than 725 species of butterflies are found in North America. Approximately 83 are found in Broward County. Broward butterflies range in size from as small as just under 1/2 inch for the Amethyst Hairstreak to as large as the 5.5-inch Giant Swallowtail. Butterfly feet possess a sense of taste. When the feet come in contact with nectar, the straw-like mouth, called the proboscis, uncoils. Butterfly wings are covered with colorful overlapping scales which are mainly used for protection. These scales can also be modified to release an odor for females to attract males for mating and can also be faceted to refract light, creating iridescent hues. The time from egg-laying to emergence of the adult butterfly varies from 29 to 53 days. Adult butterflies do not chew leaves, bite or carry diseases.

Attracting Butterflies to Your Yard

Nectar flowers will bring butterflies to your yard to feed and are not harmed by the adult butterflies. Planting a food source for the caterpillars, which serve as host plants for larvae, will attract butterflies to your yard throughout their life cycle. The larval host plants are meant to be eaten by butterfly caterpillars. Native plants are a good choice for attracting butterflies. The plants provide the nectar, and the butterflies pollinate the plants when they come to feed on the nectar.

Broward’s Butterflies

Unlike other parts of the United States, butterflies in Broward County typically have continuous generations. The peak seasons for butterflies are spring, early summer, and fall. During the fall, Broward County witnesses its greatest abundance of butterflies, both migratory and resident.

Adult (Monarch Danaus plexippus)

Life span for a butterfly is 5 days to 6 months

Egg

Egg takes from 5 to 10 days to hatch

Chrysalis

Chrysalis stage lasts 10 to 15 days

Larva or Caterpillar

Larva grows from 2 to 4 weeks before pupation into a chrysalis

Butterfly Facts

More than 725 species of butterflies are found in North America. Approximately 83 are found in Broward County. Broward butterflies range in size from as small as just under 1/2 inch for the Amethyst Hairstreak to as large as the 5.5-inch Giant Swallowtail. Butterfly feet possess a sense of taste. When the feet come in contact with nectar, the straw-like mouth, called the proboscis, uncoils. Butterfly wings are covered with colorful overlapping scales which are mainly used for protection. These scales can also be modified to release an odor for females to attract males for mating and can also be faceted to refract light, creating iridescent hues. The time from egg-laying to emergence of the adult butterfly varies from 29 to 53 days. Adult butterflies do not chew leaves, bite or carry diseases.

Attracting Butterflies to Your Yard

Nectar flowers will bring butterflies to your yard to feed and are not harmed by the adult butterflies. Planting a food source for the caterpillars, which serve as host plants for larvae, will attract butterflies to your yard throughout their life cycle. The larval host plants are meant to be eaten by butterfly caterpillars. Native plants are a good choice for attracting butterflies. The plants provide the nectar, and the butterflies pollinate the plants when they come to feed on the nectar.

Broward’s Butterflies

Unlike other parts of the United States, butterflies in Broward County typically have continuous generations. The peak seasons for butterflies are spring, early summer, and fall. During the fall, Broward County witnesses its greatest abundance of butterflies, both migratory and resident.

Adult (Monarch Danaus plexippus)

Life span for a butterfly is 5 days to 6 months

Egg

Egg takes from 5 to 10 days to hatch

Chrysalis

Chrysalis stage lasts 10 to 15 days

Larva or Caterpillar

Larva grows from 2 to 4 weeks before pupation into a chrysalis

Butterfly Facts

More than 725 species of butterflies are found in North America. Approximately 83 are found in Broward County. Broward butterflies range in size from as small as just under 1/2 inch for the Amethyst Hairstreak to as large as the 5.5-inch Giant Swallowtail. Butterfly feet possess a sense of taste. When the feet come in contact with nectar, the straw-like mouth, called the proboscis, uncoils. Butterfly wings are covered with colorful overlapping scales which are mainly used for protection. These scales can also be modified to release an odor for females to attract males for mating and can also be faceted to refract light, creating iridescent hues. The time from egg-laying to emergence of the adult butterfly varies from 29 to 53 days. Adult butterflies do not chew leaves, bite or carry diseases.

Attracting Butterflies to Your Yard

Nectar flowers will bring butterflies to your yard to feed and are not harmed by the adult butterflies. Planting a food source for the caterpillars, which serve as host plants for larvae, will attract butterflies to your yard throughout their life cycle. The larval host plants are meant to be eaten by butterfly caterpillars. Native plants are a good choice for attracting butterflies. The plants provide the nectar, and the butterflies pollinate the plants when they come to feed on the nectar.

Broward’s Butterflies

Unlike other parts of the United States, butterflies in Broward County typically have continuous generations. The peak seasons for butterflies are spring, early summer, and fall. During the fall, Broward County witnesses its greatest abundance of butterflies, both migratory and resident.

Adult (Monarch Danaus plexippus)

Life span for a butterfly is 5 days to 6 months

Egg

Egg takes from 5 to 10 days to hatch

Chrysalis

Chrysalis stage lasts 10 to 15 days

Larva or Caterpillar

Larva grows from 2 to 4 weeks before pupation into a chrysalis

Butterfly Facts

More than 725 species of butterflies are found in North America. Approximately 83 are found in Broward County. Broward butterflies range in size from as small as just under 1/2 inch for the Amethyst Hairstreak to as large as the 5.5-inch Giant Swallowtail. Butterfly feet possess a sense of taste. When the feet come in contact with nectar, the straw-like mouth, called the proboscis, uncoils. Butterfly wings are covered with colorful overlapping scales which are mainly used for protection. These scales can also be modified to release an odor for females to attract males for mating and can also be faceted to refract light, creating iridescent hues. The time from egg-laying to emergence of the adult butterfly varies from 29 to 53 days. Adult butterflies do not chew leaves, bite or carry diseases.

Attracting Butterflies to Your Yard

Nectar flowers will bring butterflies to your yard to feed and are not harmed by the adult butterflies. Planting a food source for the caterpillars, which serve as host plants for larvae, will attract butterflies to your yard throughout their life cycle. The larval host plants are meant to be eaten by butterfly caterpillars. Native plants are a good choice for attracting butterflies. The plants provide the nectar, and the butterflies pollinate the plants when they come to feed on the nectar.
Butterflies and Caterpillars You Might See

Butterflies

- Gulf Fritillary (Agraulis vanillae)
- Queen (Danaus gilippus hercules)
- Julia (Dryas julia)
- Cloudless Sulphur (Phoebis sennae)
- Giant Swallowtail (Papilio cresphontes)
- Black Swallowtail (Papilio polyxenes)
- Common Buckeye (Hemaris thysbe)
- Zebra Longwing (Heliconius charitonius)

Caterpillars

- “Orange Dog caterpillar”
- Zebra Longwing and Orange-barred Sulphur (Phoebis philea)
- Cloudless Sulphur and Orange-barred Sulphur
- Coin Vine (Dalbergia ecastaphyllum)
- Statira Sulphur (Phoebis statira)
- Cloudless Sulphur (Phoebis sennae)
- Giant Swallowtail (Papilio cresphontes)
- Black Swallowtail (Papilio polyxenes)
- Common Buckeye (Hemaris thysbe)
- Zebra Longwing (Heliconius charitonius)
- Cloudless Sulphur (Phoebis sennae)
- Giant Swallowtail (Papilio cresphontes)
- Cloudless Sulphur (Phoebis sennae)
- Giant Swallowtail (Papilio cresphontes)
- Cloudless Sulphur (Phoebis sennae)
- Giant Swallowtail (Papilio cresphontes)
- Cloudless Sulphur (Phoebis sennae)
- Giant Swallowtail (Papilio cresphontes)
- Cloudless Sulphur (Phoebis sennae)
- Giant Swallowtail (Papilio cresphontes)
- Cloudless Sulphur (Phoebis sennae)
- Giant Swallowtail (Papilio cresphontes)

Larval Host Plants

Remember: Larval host plants will be eaten by butterfly caterpillars. It is a good idea to plant larval host plants with other plants to avoid the “eaten look.”

- Corky-Stemmed Passion Vine (Passiflora suberosa)
- Passion Flower (Passiflora incarnata) but will accept any Passiflora except Passiflora coccinea
- Chapman’s Senna (Senna chapmanii)
- Coin Vine (Dalbergia ecastaphyllum)
- Wild Tamarind (Lyctocarpus latifolius)
- Butterfly Weed (Asclepias tuberosa)
- White Twine Vine (Sarcotheca clavata)
- Wild Petunia (Ruellia caroliniensis)
- Wild Lima (Zanthoxylum fagara)
- Jamaica Dogwood (Piscidia piscipula)
- Parsley, Fennel, Dill* and plants in the Carrot family
- Bay Cedar (Suriana maritima)
- Coontie (Zizia floridana)
- Cowpea (Vigna unguiculata) or other plants in the pea family
- Golden Canna (Canna flaccida)
- Indica (Evaecta coccinea)
- Vines in general are very aggressive at best and take extra work to contain them. Planting in a container or using a root-barrier may help reduce maintenance.

Note: Vines in general are very aggressive at best and take extra work to contain them. Planting in a container or using a root-barrier may help reduce maintenance.

Tips for Your Butterfly Garden

- Place in a sunny, low-traffic area
- Make sure there are larger plants or a windbreak for shelter (north side of garden)
- Provide nectar plants
- Include larval host plants for butterflies that you see in your area or ones you would like to attract
- Provide a water source for drinking or a damp area for males to extract salts
- Place flat rocks in sunny places for butterflies to warm themselves

Nectar Plants

Adult butterflies need nectar throughout their adult lives. Be sure to plant a number of diverse species so you will have flowers blooming continuously during the year.

When choosing nectar plants, vary the color, species, flower shapes and sizes, and plant in blocks of color. Red, yellow, orange, pink or purple blossoms with flattened tops and short tube flowers are favored. As a general rule, flowers with strong fragrances also have the best nectar.

Here are some suggestions for nectar plants:

- Gaillardia or Blanket Flower (Gaillardia pulchella)
- Scorpion’s tail (Heliocarpus angustifolius)
- Florida Fiddleneck (Citharexylum spinosum)
- Coral Honeysuckle (Lonicera sempervirens)
- Snowberry (Chicorea alba)
- Bloodberry (Cordia globosa)
- Walter’s Viburnum (Viburnum obovatum)
- Blue Porterweed (Stachytarpheta jamaicensis)
- Tropical Sage (Salvia coccinea)
- Pentas (Pentas lanceolata)
- Firebush (Hamelia patens)
- Mist Flower (Conoclinium coelestinum)
- Wild Coffee (Psychotria nervosa)
- Brown Dotted Horsemint (Monarda punctata)
- Pineland Heliotrope (Heliotropium polyphyllum)
- Yellowtop (Flaveria linearis)

Photos by Sandra Granson UF/Broward County Extension Education Section Parks and Recreation Division.