

Youth Gardening Activity

Designing a Butterfly Garden

By Donna Aufdenberg, Field Specialist in Horticulture

Attract these butterflies



Black swallowtail



Monarch



Common buckeye



Eastern tiger swallowtail



Painted lady

How to make a butterfly garden

- Find a location with at least 6 to 8 hours of sunlight.
- Choose an area equal to 100 square foot (roughly 10 ft x 10 ft). Several smaller areas can be planted but they need to be close together and equivalent to 100 sq. ft.
- Plant lots of flowers!
 - ⇒ Different colors.
 - ⇒ Different shapes.
 - ⇒ Different sizes and heights.
- Combine nectar and caterpillar food sources.
- Plant at least 10 plants of two different species to increase butterfly numbers.
- Direct seed flowers and use flower transplants.
- Add a small clay saucer or birdbath with sand or small pebbles in the bottom and shallow water for butterflies.
- Add light colored rocks for basking in the sunlight on cool mornings.
- Add fruit peelings like watermelon or cantaloupe to attract some butterflies.

“Old fashioned flower varieties are butterfly favorites.”

Fun facts and tips

- There are 198 recorded species of butterflies in Missouri. Each species is unique and requires various nectar and food sources.
- The role of butterflies is important in nature. As pollinators, they help plants produce fruit and seeds.
- Butterflies love the sun. They use it to increase their body temperature, which is necessary for flight.
- Butterflies have food preferences. Flowers with high sugar concentration are best as a food source.
- Lifecycle of a butterfly is complete metamorphosis: egg, caterpillar, pupa to adult.

Attract these caterpillars



Black swallowtail caterpillar



Monarch caterpillar

Food sources for caterpillars

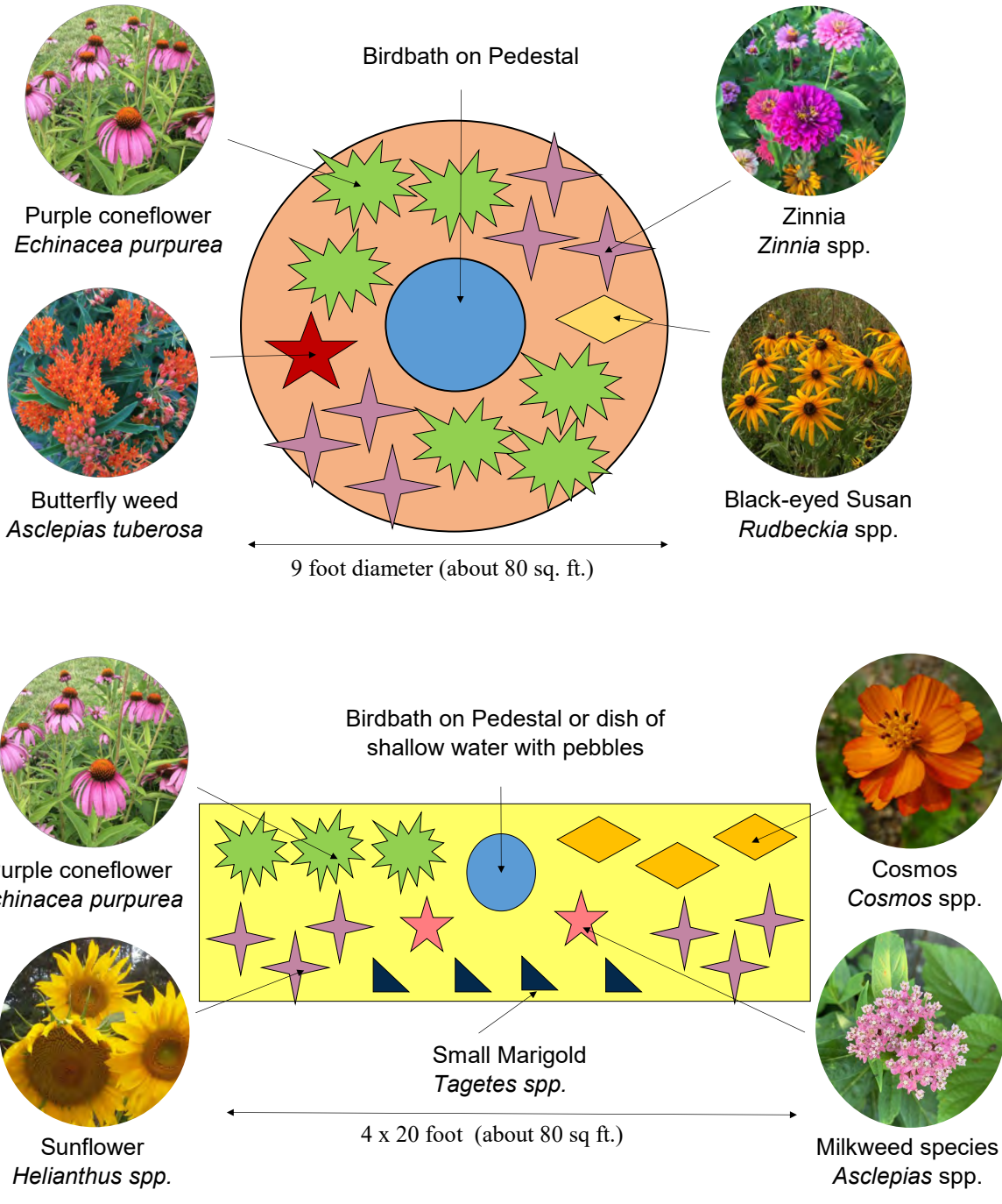


Parsley for black swallowtail caterpillars



Milkweed for monarch caterpillars

Examples of butterfly gardens



- Nectar plants from seed**
 - Black-eyed Susan
 - Cosmos
 - Gaillardia
 - Marigold
 - Snapdragon
 - Sunflower
 - Zinnia
- Nectar plants as transplants**
 - Aromatic aster
 - Butterfly bush
 - Butterfly weed
 - Coreopsis
 - Lantana
 - Liatris
 - Milkweed species
 - Monarda
 - Phlox
 - Purple coneflower
- Food for caterpillars**
 - Dill
 - Hollyhock
 - Milkweed
 - Parsley
 - Snapdragon

Resources

MU Extension publication M404, [Native Insect Pollinators and Their Habitats](https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/m404) (https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/m404)

Missouri Botanical [Garden Butterfly Gardening \(PDF\)](https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/Portals/0/Gardening/Gardening%20Help/Factsheets/Butterfly%20Gardening4.pdf) (https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/Portals/0/Gardening/Gardening%20Help/Factsheets/Butterfly%20Gardening4.pdf)