

# garden for butterflies

And you'll never be short of visitors



Butterflies are always a delight to see in the garden, and we can help their populations by growing more of the plants they need. The adult butterflies feed only on nectar from plants like sedum and thyme, but it's important to feed the caterpillars too with specific plants for them.

## Garden Butterfly Survey

Take part in the Garden Butterfly Survey! All you have to do is count the numbers of each species of butterfly you see in your garden and let us know what you find through the year. Visit [gardenbutterflysurvey.org](http://gardenbutterflysurvey.org) to get started.

You can also download the free iRecord Butterflies app and send us your sightings that way. It's available for Apple and Android smartphones and tablets, and comes with a complete identification guide

In spring the first butterflies to visit gardens are those which have hibernated through the winter as adults. They often tuck themselves away in sheds, log piles and dark spaces within homes. Providing these nectar-rich plants for butterflies will give the energy to fly around, look for mates, and find somewhere to lay their eggs.



Bugle



Comma on heather

Spring plants for butterflies	
Bugle	Muscari / grape hyacinth
Willow	Early-flowering heathers
Lady's Smock	Alyssum
Aubrieta	Honesty
Perennial Wallflower	Forget-Me-Not
Bluebell	Primrose, Cowslip, Oxlip

Photo credits: Allan Watt, (front), Anthony McCluskey, Andy Seeley (reverse)

In summer butterflies will be more active and your garden can become a haven for many species if you provide nectar-rich plants from May to October

Summer plants for butterflies	
Sedums	Buddleia
Lavender	Scabious
Michaelmas daisy	Thistles
Cardoon	Echinacea
Candytuft	Hebe
Verbena bonariensis	Hemp Agrimony
Hardy geranium	Zinnia
Open-flowered Dahlia	Sea holly
Liatris spicata	Flowering mint
Jacob's ladder	Hyssop
Phlox	Red valerian
Escallonia	Sweet rocket
Heathers	Thrift
Helenium	Spiraea
Bidens	Thyme
Marjoram	Inula
Rudbeckia	Sunflower

As well as these ornamental garden plants, you can help butterflies by leaving some plants which are often regarded as weeds. Dandelions are one of the most important wildflowers for butterflies and bees early in the year, while ragwort and thistles will also provide a lot of nectar later on.

Another idea is to simply leave your lawn—or part of it at least—to grow longer, only cutting it once per year. Many wildflowers can persist in closely-mown lawns for a long time, so relaxing the mowing regime can allow them to flower and you'll have a wildflower meadow without having to see it. You can also add plug-plants of Self-heal, Cat's-ear, Ox-eye daisy and Bird's-foot trefoil to get things going.

### Caterpillar food plants

For butterflies to complete their life cycles they need specific plants to lay their eggs upon, which their caterpillars will eat. If you don't want rampant thistles, you can try garden varieties such as *Cirsium rivulare* 'Atropurpureum' for a wonderful display of deep purple flowers which don't self-seed.

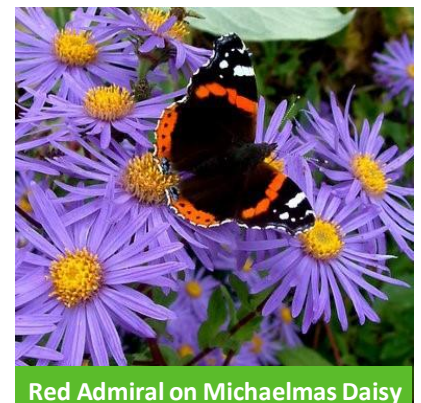
Lady's Smock, Cuckoo-flower	Holly	Honesty
Sweet rocket	Aubrieta	Thistles
Bird's-foot-trefoil	Ivy	Nasturtium
Common sorrel, Dock	Oak	Nettle

### Try a meadow

Wildflower meadows are some of the best places for butterflies as their nectar plants and caterpillar foodplants can be found together there. A true meadow will have a mix of annual plants, but more importantly will have perennial wildflowers which are native to the countryside around you. Key plants to include are knapweed, ox-eye daisy, red clover, bird's-foot trefoil, self-heal and a few species of grass. These mixes are best sown in early spring or autumn, onto soil which has been prepared by removing as much of the existing vegetation as possible through digging or raking. It may not look like much for the first year or two, but given time it could become a stable wildflower meadow. Cut once a year in autumn, and remove the cut material.



Nasturtium



Red Admiral on Michaelmas Daisy



Orange-tip on Lady's-smock

