

## Butterfly Plants

By: Melinda Sperl

Planting a garden to include butterflies is something that you can easily do and is a great way for children to learn about gardens. Butterflies are attracted to the nectar of most flowers but some attract them more depending on the species of butterfly.

Monarch caterpillars feed exclusively on milkweed (asclepias) and one species of this plant is Mexican Butterfly Weed (asclepias tuberosa). This also means that the females only lay their eggs on this plant. One note to the gardener, these caterpillars eat all the leaves and leave a bare plant so do not plant this plant for its foliage or flowers. This is one plant that you plant strictly for the Monarchs. One other little tidbit for the butterfly enthusiasts is that the Monarch Butterfly is the State insect of Texas!

Other butterfly attractant plants are Russelia, Cuphea, Esparanza, Salvia, hibiscus, bee balm, marigold, bronze fennel and lantana or just remember the brighter flowers are better. Fruit trees are the host plant for Black Swallowtail so be on the lookout for one ugly caterpillar and no leaves on your fruit trees. It won't kill the tree and it is a spectacular butterfly.

Remember, caterpillars are the larval stage for butterfly and moths so please refrain from killing them or putting insecticide on the plants that host them.

Happy Gardening!

Melinda Sperl is a Horticulturalist and the owner of Dream Landscape Design, Inc. You can reach Melinda at [Melinda@dreamlandscapedesign.com](mailto:Melinda@dreamlandscapedesign.com) or [www.dreamlandscapedesign.com](http://www.dreamlandscapedesign.com)