



**This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online at <https://ksre-learn.com/gardening-for-butterflies>

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Gardening for butterflies

K-State horticulture instructor shares tips to attract butterflies to the garden

K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. — Attracting butterflies to the garden through plant selection has grown in popularity, said Kansas State University horticulture expert Cynthia Domenghini. Knowing what species of plants butterflies prefer can help gardeners with their selections, she said.

“Butterflies are crucial for pollination and are a delight to host in the garden,” Domenghini said, noting that the North American Butterfly Association has resources for gardeners wanting to certify their landscape as a butterfly habitat.

Certification includes planting at least three different caterpillar food plants; at least three different native butterfly nectar sources; and not using insecticides or pesticides.

The Monarch Watch organization also has a process to register a garden as a Monarch Waystation. Domenghini said there are more than 46,000 Monarch Waystations in the world, which meet the following features:

- Receives at least six hours of sunlight each day.
- Contains at least 10 milkweed plants, preferably with two more species.
- Contains nectar plants, including annuals, biennials and perennials.

Domenghini listed annual plants that attract butterflies:

- Ageratum.
- Cosmos.
- French marigold.
- Petunia.
- Verbena.
- Zinnia.

“Group similar species of annuals together to create a planting more likely to attract butterflies,” Domenghini said. “Including a mix of annuals with varying bloom times can lengthen the butterfly season.”

Early blooming perennials that attract butterflies include:

- Allium.
- Chives.
- Forget-me-not.
- Lilac.

Mid-Season blooming perennials include:

- Bee balm.
- Butterfly bush.
- Black-eyed Susan.
- Buttonbush.
- Butterfly weed.
- Daisy.
- Daylily.
- Gaillardia.
- Lavender.
- Lily.
- Mint.
- Phlox.
- Privet.
- Sunflower.
- Veronica.

Late-Season blooming perennials include:

- Aster.
- Glossy.
- Abelia.
- Sedum.

“Other features you can incorporate in the garden to appeal to butterflies include areas of full sun. Butterflies are cold-blooded so they seek sunshine for warmth,” Domenghini said. “Shade is also necessary so they can escape from intense sun.”

Water is also important for butterflies and can be provided with a birdbath or water-filled saucer on the ground, Domenghini said.

Domenghini and her colleagues in K-State’s Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources produce a [weekly Horticulture Newsletter](#) with tips for maintaining home landscapes and gardens.

Interested persons can subscribe to the newsletter, as well as send their garden and yard-related questions to hortsupport@ksu.edu, or contact your [local K-State Research and Extension office](#).

K-State Horticulture Newsletter, <https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/newsletters/index.html>

K-State Research and Extension local offices, <https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations.html>

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For more information:

Cynthia Domenghini

Cdom@ksu.edu