

# Butterflies Bring Color & Motion to Gardens

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office*



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**PHOTO CREDIT: William M. Johnson**

**Butterflies are the gems of the insect world. Master Gardener Lisa Nicklow Davis will provide a seminar on Butterflies and Native Plants on Saturday, October 26, at the AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park.**

Butterflies are the gems of the insect world. Their graceful flight and bright colors never fail to delight children and adults alike including me. Not satisfied with the occasional appearance of butterflies, many gardeners are creating their own butterfly gardens with plants specially chosen to invite them into the landscape.

Planning a butterfly garden may seem a bit intimidating if you're just getting started. While walking among some plants brought back to the Discovery Garden after the recently held fall plant sale, I was as surprised as I was inspired by the number of butterflies that came to sip the floral nectar produced by plants be-

ing grown in containers. The collection of container plants essentially served as an impromptu butterfly garden. The butterflies seemed to be collectively saying "You need not make butterfly gardening an overly complicated endeavor."

This is understandable, since the mixture of





flowers and the fluttering movement of colorful butterflies are one of nature's most enchanting combinations. The fall growing season provides an excellent opportunity to establish plants in your landscape.

In the complete butterfly garden, these plants are planted with the hope that butterflies will lay eggs on them and will serve as the food source for the developing caterpillars. This is one of the few situations I can think of where a gardener hopes a plant will be eaten by caterpillars.

Needless to say, if you must use insecticide in your butterfly garden, select the least toxic insecticide available that will not harm butterflies or the beneficial insects that keep the garden pest free.

Remember that the caterpillars are picky about what plants they will feed on and will feed specifically on the larval food plants you provide for them. You generally do not need to be concerned that they will attack and damage other plants in your landscape—unless you have larval food plants planted in other locations.

The adult butterflies feed primarily on nectar from flowers. The greater the diversity in types of flowers you include in your butterfly garden, the better the chance you have of attracting adult butterflies.

Don't be disappointed if at first you don't see butterflies flocking to

your yard in droves. After all, your garden is an open invitation, not a command performance. The more plants you put in, and the longer you stick with it, the more likely you are to see butterflies. After a while, spotting a butterfly will be more common.

Butterfly gardens strive to attract, welcome and nurture these fascinating and lovely insects that add so much to the pleasures of gardening. With their abundance of bright, colorful flowers, these gardens also can contribute to the beauty of the overall landscape.

Don't forget to include your children and grandchildren in the process. Kids are delighted by the changing stages in a butterfly's life cycle, and it's a great way for them to learn more about nature.

### ***At a Glance***

**Fall Plant Sale:** A second Fall Plant Sale will be conducted by Master Gardeners from 9:00 - 11:30 A.M. on Thursday, October 24, at the Discovery Garden located in Carbide Park (4102 Main Street, La Marque). A variety of plants remaining from the Annual Fall Plant Sale will be available at discounted prices including citrus trees, bulbs, perennials and cool-season vegetables for planting in the fall vegetable garden.

**Butterfly Gardening Seminar:** Butterfly gardening involves planning your garden to attract, retain, and encourage butterfly popula-

tions. Butterfly gardens come in all shapes and sizes ranging from one or several plants in a container, a few plants in one or more beds to an entire back yard.

Master Gardener Lisa Nicklow Davis will provide a PowerPoint presentation on Butterflies and Native Plants on Saturday, October 26, from 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office located in Carbide Park at 4102-B Main in La Marque.

Butterflies will visit any garden, however small, if they can feed from suitable nectar plants. Butterflies can be enjoyed in Galveston County almost year-round. Lisa's presentation will include different butterfly species that can be found in our area and what native plants to use in your garden or in containers to attract them.

The presentation is sponsored by the Galveston County Master Gardeners as a public service to our county residents. The program is free-of-charge but pre-registration is required. (E-mail: [galvcountymgs@gmail.com](mailto:galvcountymgs@gmail.com); phone: 281-309-5065).

