

# Building a Southern Butterfly Garden

***"If you build it they will come!"***

The south, in my case central Florida, is a wonderful place to have a butterfly garden, because various things are blooming most of the year! If you are used to gardening in the north, you have to readjust your orientation to those plants that withstand the heat and humidity of the south!



**Butterfly garden basics: to simply attract butterflies to your garden or yard, you need to have flowers which are rich sources of nectar. But to really encourage butterflies to hang out - and spend much of the year in your yard, you also need to have the host plants upon which they lay their eggs. In other words, you grow plants for the explicit purpose of being eaten! For example, milkweed is the host plant for Monarch butterflies.**

**Where To Buy Plants? The less you spend on good-quality plants, the more plants you can buy!**

**Discount stores sometimes will sell plants from their suppliers that may not necessarily grow in your area, so only buy those plants you are sure of.**

**Zebra butterfly on some butterfly bush. She spent much of the day finding good spots on the passionflower vine to lay eggs.**





Your local nursery may be more expensive, but may have very high-quality plants and is almost always an excellent source of information and encouragement! Our local nursery (see below) sponsors educational programs and even has a butterfly house! A good on-line source of perennials from whom I purchased many plants in the past when I lived in a remote area is [Bluestone Perennials](#).

Gardening in semi-tropical Florida is a trip! Above are blue-crowned conures at my bird feeder! Controversy rages over whether this flock, which now numbers about 45, were originally escapees or if they were blown north from the Caribbean during a hurricane.

## Suggested Nectar-Rich Plants:

Any fragrant, nectar-rich plants will attract butterflies. Those with red/orange deep-throated flowers (such as coral honeysuckle) may also attract hummingbirds.

- Red Pentas
- Lantana
- Porterweed
- Salvia
- Milkweed (butterfly weed)
- Buddleia (butterfly bush) seen here with skipper.



# Suggested Host Plants



Remember - these plants are here to be eaten! To create a butterfly-friendly environment you cannot spray insecticide in your garden! When you see these plants being eaten, it is a good thing! If you do see a plant being completely devoured, you may want to pick off some of the caterpillars, because once their food source is gone, they will die if it is not time to pupate - they do not have alternative food sources. Most plants, once established, will bounce back after being defoliated by caterpillars.

## Butterfly:

Atala  
Buckeye  
Giant Swallowtail  
Gulf Fritillary  
Julia  
Monarch  
Painted Lady  
Queen  
Sulphurs  
Black Swallowtail  
Pipevine Swallowtail  
Palamedes Swallowtail  
Tiger Swallowtail  
Zebra Longwing

## Host Plant:

coontie (*Zamia floridana*)  
snapdragon  
citrus trees  
passion vine (sunny spot)  
passion vine  
milkweeds  
mallows  
milkweeds  
*cassia* species  
carrots, dill, fennel, parsley  
pipevines  
red bay  
willows  
passion vine (shady spot)

This list courtesy of Rockledge Gardens, Rockledge, Florida

**White Peacock butterfly on  
porterweed.**



**Fritillary on butterfly bush.**

**Bees are also attracted to nectar  
sources! My garden is full of little  
green-headed bees! Here on  
Mexican Bell.**





One of my butterfly gardens.

An excellent book is: "Florida Butterfly Gardening" which you can order from Amazon.com!



A less expensive book which is a good atlas of Florida butterflies, is "Florida's Fabulous Butterflies"

