

## **FACT SHEET: Butterfly Gardens**

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It's nearly impossible to browse through the gardening section of a book store without seeing many resources on butterflies and butterfly gardening. In Florida we have more than 180 verified butterfly species, many are native. Florida has the most butterfly species of any state east of the Mississippi River.



Zebra Longwing, Our State Butterfly

Credits: Jaret C. Daniels, University of Florida

You can only attract butterflies that inhabit your area and grow butterfly gardening plants adapted to your climate and soil. It is easy to determine your butterfly region, select the specific species you want to attract and make plant selections based on those butterfly species. The information needed for the entire State of Florida is a few clicks away:

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FILES/UW/UW05700.pdf>. This article, Butterfly Gardening in Florida, by Jaret C. Daniels, Joe Schaefer, Craig N. Huegel, and Frank J. Mazzotti, provides straight forward information that will simplify your decision-making process.

To insure the presence of these 'flying flowers' in your landscape, you need to provide:

**Sun:** Your butterfly garden needs sun for most of the day.

**Soil:** Take a soil sample and have it analyzed by the soils testing laboratory. Based on the results, apply fertilizer and lime per the recommendations provided.

**Water for plants:** Locate your butterfly garden near a water source or utilize microirrigation for your butterfly plants.

**Water for butterflies:** Add a shallow puddle in full sun so the butterflies can get a drink. Adding a small piece of over-ripe fruit to the puddle provides the butterfly with salts and amino acids needed.

**Fertilizer:** Apply slow release fertilizer in the summer to keep your butterfly plants productive.

**Nectar plants:** These invite butterflies to your garden.

**Larval plants:** Provide a food source and a reason for butterflies to remain and reproduce in your garden. Purchase specific larval plants to attract specific butterfly species. If you purchase plants from a pesticide-using nursery, understand that chemicals can kill butterfly larvae. Use pesticides only to spot treat an infected plant.

For more information on butterfly gardening, read *Getting Started in Butterfly Gardening*: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in564> and *Community Butterfly Scaping*: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep420>. Visit or call the Hillsborough County Extension office for additional horticulture information. We are located at 5339 County Road 579, Seffner, FL 33584, (813) 744-5519. Master Gardeners are available Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. We can help!