



Henderson County Master Gardeners Weekly News Article

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Native Plant Series: Natives for Butterflies, Bees, and Hummers

by Lydia Holley

Everyone loves to see colorful butterflies dancing among the blooms in their gardens. There are two ways to attract butterflies to your garden: by planting nectar plants, which the butterfly uses for nourishment; and host plants, which the butterfly uses to lay eggs upon. Most of the time, the host plants will be eaten ravenously by the hungry little caterpillars that emerge from the eggs.



If you want to attract butterflies with native nectar plants, consider growing bluebonnets (*Lupinus texensis*), winecups (*Callirhoe involucrata*), coneflowers (*Echinaceas*), Gregg's mistflower (*Conoclinium greggii*), and rock rose (*Pavonia*).

To help the monarch population, plant milkweed, their host plant. Remember, however, that when the caterpillars eat the leaves of your plants, those are future butterflies, so do not kill them. Just let your garden look ragged for a while, and you will be rewarded in the future with blissful, beautiful butterflies.

Other native butterfly host plants you may wish to add are the wood strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*), which is the host for the Painted Lady butterfly; passionflower (*Passiflora incarnata*), which is the host for the Gulf Fritillary, Zebra Longwing and Red-banded hairstreak; and Dutchman's pipe vine (*Aristolochia tomentosa*). Although not a Texas native, Dutchman's pipe is a U.S. native and the host plant for the Pipevine Swallowtail.

Not only has the monarch butterfly population decline been in the news, so too, has the mysterious deaths of honey bees. You can do your part to help the bees by planting blanket flower (*Gaillardia*), bee balm (*Monarda*), salvias, summer sweet (*Clethra*), and trees such as crabapples (*Malus*) and some of the native hollies such as possumhaw (*Ilex decidua*) or American holly (*Ilex opeca*). Again, be certain not to use chemicals in your garden, especially if your goal is to attract pollinators.

Hummingbirds are another joy to see in the garden. There are numerous native plants that will attract them to your garden. Crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata*), red yucca (*Hesperaloe parviflora*), Texas star hibiscus (*Hibiscus coccineus*), Texas sage (*Leucophyllum frutescens*), penstemon 'Husker Red' and yellow bells (*Tecoma stans*) will have them fighting over your beautiful blooms.

You can also attract hummingbirds even if you have a shady garden. Cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardelis*), turk's cap (*Malvaviscus*), red honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*), Indian pink (*Spigelia marilandica*), and Brazos penstemon (*Penstemon tenuis*) will all bloom in varying degrees of shade.

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com or visit www.henderson-co-tx-mg.org.