

ATTRACTING BIRDS AND BUTTERFLIES TO YOUR GARDEN USING FLORIDA NATIVE PLANTS



To attract birds, butterflies and other wildlife to your garden, you obviously need to have trees and shrubs (preferably native) with flowers and fruits. So you planted a nice native shrub with flowers right in the middle of the front yard, and you still don't see any creatures? Consider these ideas:

Diversify. Have a wide variety of species to provide year-round food and cover. Remember that different plants flower and fruit or drop their leaves in different seasons.

Cater to every taste. Most native plants listed as "wildlife attracting" have fruits or nectar eaten by birds and butterflies. However, insect-eating birds need plants which attract tiny insects (for example, a wild tamarind, *Lysiloma latisiliquum*, in flower). Piles of branches and even dead twigs area also provide shelter for insects which are eaten by birds (and may also be beneficial insects, such as pollinators)..

Feed the baby. To have adult butterflies, the species-specific larval food plants need to be available. Remember that larval food plants may sometimes be denuded by hungry caterpillars!

Spare that weed. Leaving some native "weeds" in your garden (such as Spanish needle, *Bidens spp.*), helps ensure that there is something in bloom for butterflies to nectar on. Some weeds are also butterfly larval foods.

Make a hiding place. Have areas where plants are close and dense, to provide birds with cover from the elements and predators. Trees and shrubs which keep dense foliage all year, such as pigeon plum (*Coccoloba diversifolia*), are especially valuable. Piles of brush can also be havens for wildlife.

Give them a drink. If you can't create a pond, use a large plant saucer, filled with water with some rocks in it, for birds and a dish of wet sand for butterflies.

Please your plants. Plants known for their flowers usually need sun. Passion vines need support, whether a chain-link fence, trellis, or tree (but don't let it smother the tree!). Some plants need dry soil to thrive and flower. Learn each plant's needs.

Plant a firebush. Everybody loves *Hamelia patens* with its orange flowers and plentiful berries - birds, butterflies and people!

Leave a snag. Removing a tree or tall shrub? Consider leaving a tall stump in its place. As the stump decays, it will provide a perch as well as a home for insects that feed woodpeckers.

Don't use cypress mulch! Cypress stands in productive wetlands are being cut and ground into mulch, not as a byproduct of lumbering, but solely to decorate urban gardens. Use Melaleuca mulch, eucalyptus mulch, pine bark, or chips from tree services.

Dade Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

<http://dade.fnpschapters.org>

11/13/2005

updated 5/5/2010