



## Attracting Butterflies (and moths!)

Marc Radell, Master Gardener, Montgomery County, PA

- Butterflies, moths, and caterpillars are all important contributors to a healthy ecosystem:
  - Pollination, food web
- There are 72 common species of butterflies and 1,080 species of moths in the Delaware Valley
- They undergo complete metamorphosis: egg, larva (caterpillar), pupa (chrysalis/cocoon) adult
- Major groups of butterflies: swallowtails, whites & sulfurs, gossamer wings, brush-foots
- Moths are beneficial, too. Save them by keeping outdoor lights off or on motion detectors
- Like all wildlife, butterflies need food, water, shelter, and places to raise young
- Sustainable gardening is a must! Minimize pesticides, create natural areas, plant natives
- Choose host plants for caterpillars (need leaves they can eat) and nectar plants for adults
- No caterpillars, no butterflies!
- Use puddles and "mistlers" for water
- Have shrubs, woodpiles, etc for shelter
- Look for eggs, caterpillars, and pupae when weeding, pruning & raking
- Plates of overripe fruit can attract brush-foots
- Gardening tips: assess your site: soil type, sun, moisture, temperature zone; make a plan; start small, then expand; plant in groups (en masse)
- Some host plants to attract butterflies:
  - Trees: black cherry, sweet crabapple, flowering dogwood, sweetbay magnolia, river birch, redbud
  - Shrubs: chokeberry, redbud dogwood, flame azalea, buttonbush, sweet pepperbush (clethra), blueberry. Butterfly bush is invasive and distracts butterflies from pollinating host plants
  - Vines: coral honeysuckle, American or Kentucky wisteria, Dutchman's pipe, virgin's bower, trumpet creeper, Virginia creeper
  - Perennials: turtlehead, plantain, violet, Queen Anne's lace, Carolina petunia, toadflax
- Nectar flowers: butterflies prefer cluster of small flowers or daisy-like flowers
  - Butterfly weed, swamp milkweed, common milkweed
  - Joe Pye weed
  - Verbena
  - Aster
  - Coneflower
  - Cup plant
  - Monarda
  - Culver's root
  - Rudbeckia
  - Ironweed
  - Non-invasive annuals: zinnias, cosmos, tithonia (Mexican sunflower)
- Summary:
  - Host plants for caterpillars are just as important as nectar plants for adults
  - There's a butterfly-attracting plant suitable for every garden need
  - Natives rule!

for copies of presentation and lots of other information, including detailed plant lists, visit  
[www.marcmradell.com](http://www.marcmradell.com)