

## Go Wild! Create a hummingbird and butterfly friendly garden!

Everyone loves hummingbirds and butterflies. You can't help but smile when one of these colorful visitors gracefully dances among the flowering plants in your landscape.

Not only do they capture the attention of adults, but hummingbirds and butterflies can also be a wonderful tool for helping youngsters learn about ecology, native plants, and insect life cycles. By planting wildlife friendly plants you are helping to ensure the survival of often-endangered species.

### Butterflies

Butterflies life cycle consists of four phases: egg, caterpillar, chrysalis, and finally butterfly. They serve as pollinators and are a source of food for some animals. As such, their presence is an indicator of the health of the environment.

Butterflies can travel for miles, and are capable of identifying plants from great distances. Each type of butterfly has its favorite plant foods, and they also have color preferences. A butterfly garden can be any size, but plant selection is an important factor. Many native and desert-adapted plants available at local nurseries attract butterflies. It is also important to consider the ultimate size, water and sun requirements when choosing plants.



Butterflies are most often attracted to a plant's flowers. Mass plantings of flowers usually do a better job of attracting butterflies than a single plant. Look for plants with wide, shallow flowers, or those with clusters of flowers that, together, provide good perching platforms.

To have a true butterfly garden, you must also feed the larva. Plants that produce food for larvae attract and keep adult butterflies in the garden, as well.

### Hummingbirds

Hummingbirds can be frequent visitors to your yard without the maintenance hassle of a sticky hummingbird feeder. They are migratory but can be spotted all year. When they do return from a migratory trip, they have great memories and will often return to the same spot each year. A reason to keep a well-planted garden!



They are avid flyers and can go right, left, up down, backwards and even upside-down. All of that flying makes them voracious feeders so they need an abundant supply of flowers. Hummingbirds will consume half their weight in nectar every day. They are particularly fond of the color red and prefer flowers that are tube shaped.

Keeping a year round supply of nectar will help keep hummers in your yard. But nectar is not the only source of

nutrition for these birds, they will also consume small insects like aphids and white flies to provide the 50 percent of protein needed in their diet. Because of this, refrain from using hummingbird feeders and use nectar-providing plants instead which will provide both nectar and insects. Try to choose plants with overlapping bloom times. Plant in clusters so there are plenty of flowers to pick from.

The next time you notice aphids on your shrubs remember they could become a delicious snack for a hungry hummer. Do not use pesticides, as they can make your hummingbirds very sick. A water source, such as a small fountain or pond is helpful. Sprinkle clothes dryer lint in your yard (really, no joke!); they use it to line their nests as well as spider webs and tiny pieces of tissue paper. Vary the sizes of your plants; find low branching dense shrubs such as Jojoba, Texas rangers, or Baja red fairy duster, to provide shelter.

Plants to consider:

When considering what to plant, please refer to this handy reference guide that details plants that are attractive to humming birds or butterflies or both.

Download the [Guide to Butterfly and Hummingbird Plants](#) (PDF)

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