



Unit 3 Section 1 Lesson 3: Better Homes and Gardens

Handout 2

The Basic Needs

A rule of thumb: nectar plants in sun, host plants and shrubs in the shade. However, make an exception for milkweed! These sun loving plants serve as both host plants and nectar plants for monarchs!

1. Providing Food

There are two functions that plants serve for butterflies: nectar producing plants that feed the adult butterflies, and host plants for the butterflies to lay their eggs on and for the caterpillar to eat.

To make it simple, you can have just 3 to 6 nectaring plants that bloom at different times, providing a steady supply of nectar for the butterflies. Shrubs like lilacs (*Syringa* sp.) and butterfly bush (*Buddleia davidii*) are great for this, and they also provide shelter for the butterflies to roost for the night. Read Handout 3 for the list of nectar producing plants.

The host plants vary greatly depending on the butterfly species. The caterpillar will eat only specific plants. To determine which host plants are useful, please find out which butterfly species are local in your area. However, trees like elms, poplars, aspen, and willows offer food for many caterpillars. Also, by letting the local “weeds” grow at the fringes of your garden, you can’t go wrong. Read Handout 3 to find more details of host plants.

A TIP: Don’t forget the local wildflowers and weeds. They are the natural food and host plants for the butterflies in your region. All weeds may not be so pleasing to the eye, but caterpillars need them, and without caterpillars there are no butterflies! It is a good idea to dedicate a corner of these in your garden.

Important – do not use pesticides in your garden!

Doing so, all your efforts will be wasted.

2. Providing Water

Butterflies need water for the minerals they can extract from it. If you do not have a ditch or a stream in the vicinity, you can create a butterfly puddle by placing a shallow dish full of sand at the ground level and keeping it moist. Butterflies prefer landing on the moist sand or dirt, where they can safely obtain moisture. You can add some salt to the water you’ll supply for the butterflies to give them the sodium they need.



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3. Providing Shelter

Butterflies need shelter to roost for the night, and also for protection from wind and rain. Shrubs or vines or any type of fence or trees are ideal for that. An overgrown area resembles the natural habitat of the butterflies, thus attracting them and providing them with protection.

Butterflies also need a place to hibernate, but to that end you seldom need to build or buy anything. Many species, depending on the stage in which they overwinter, find shelter under the leaves or in the undervegetation. Some species that overwinter as adults seek buildings and basements for that purpose. A shed in your garden might be useful for that purpose. Rocks or trees may also provide places for the butterflies to hibernate.

Now you're done - **Sit back and enjoy!**
Your efforts will be rewarded.

