



How To Create A



Butterfly Habitat in Your Own Garden

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By Nigel Venters



Fig.1. This is the butterfly friendly entrance to our house. Both me, and the butterflies love it! The beds are full of Yellow Lantana, which flowers continuously all season. Lantana is one of the best nectar plants you can grow.

The Aim of this download is to enable you to enjoy your garden to the full!

There have been a few books previously published on creating a butterfly garden, but they all seem rather complex to me, requiring a complete garden re-vamp to be effective. They are generally poor when it comes to detailed information on the actual plants they recommend. These previously published books seem to contain endless lists of the hundreds of different butterflies and the hundreds of different plants that the butterflies feed on. Following their complex advice, it seems to me, that you would spend an unacceptable amount of your time trying to achieve your simple goal: the pleasure of just seeing and enjoying more beautiful butterflies at the flowers in your garden.

I have also noticed that these books seem to give little detailed information on actually making your garden butterfly friendly in a simple way, without a complete garden re-vamp. This booklet has been written to let you keep your original garden, which I'm sure you already enjoy, and by keeping things simple, just poke into the ground a few plants that will not only give you pleasure through their lovely blooms, but also to help you enjoy seeing butterflies in larger numbers than before.

This booklet is not intended to be an identification guide to butterflies, there are already many other great books published that do this. The pictures are of widely distributed butterflies in the US that you are likely to be able to see and enjoy in your garden. My selection covers the whole of the US.

At the end of this booklet, I have included a list of plants that you may like to find out more about on the internet. It is there to help you to become more involved with different species of butterflies if you would like to do so. The main body of this book concentrates on a few plants that will attract the most beautiful species to your garden, and enable them to stay, and also reproduce to give you year on year pleasure.

So my aim is to keep things simple, and also help your local butterfly population in a World of continuous development that has little thought for wildlife. Another reason for keeping things simple is that there are already many conservation societies that have detailed and targeted programmes to help endangered species. This booklet is not about endangered species, only directly aimed at helping you to enjoy your garden to the full, and in your own small way, also help the butterflies. I have also included many beautiful photos to kindle your enthusiasm and to spur you into action to enjoy these beautiful butterflies for yourself!



Fig:2. Monarch butterflies nectaring on the non-native Mexican Mock Orange (*Choisya ternata*)

Everyone loves butterflies!

Butterflies are beautiful! We all love to sit in our gardens and watch them, as an amazing variety of these beautiful creatures, flutter past us gently sipping nectar from the flowers. We watch them flutter their way across our flower-beds, and they can't help but give us that warm feeling that all is well with the World. Even the hardest-hearted gardener, who hates all the insects that eat his garden plants, has a soft spot for butterflies!

The problems today.

So why are they becoming less and less common! The problem lies with us, and it does seem a shame, for example, that our local authorities, will clear the road verges, with little regard

to the time of year it is done. Often they trim our wildflowers before they have time to set seed, and they gradually disappear from the area. The indiscriminate use of pesticides and herbicides are further problems, but habitat loss is the number one problem that spells disaster for so many of our butterflies, other insects and local wildlife in general. It makes sense that we pass laws to protect rare and endangered species from collectors, but it seems that not enough thought is given to this when an area containing a colony of these rare species is developed for housing or farmland.

Wouldn't it be a sad tragedy, and also so very selfish of us not to pass on the simple pleasures of life, like enjoying seeing butterflies, to our children, and then to their children and so on! As I said before, the problem lies with us! As a child I remember visiting one of the first wetland bird sanctuaries in the UK, and part of the tour included a picture with a closed curtain over it. In large letters above, it stated "Open the curtains and see the most dangerous animal in the World!" When the string was pulled to open the curtains, it was just a mirror, and you saw yourself! They were not wrong!

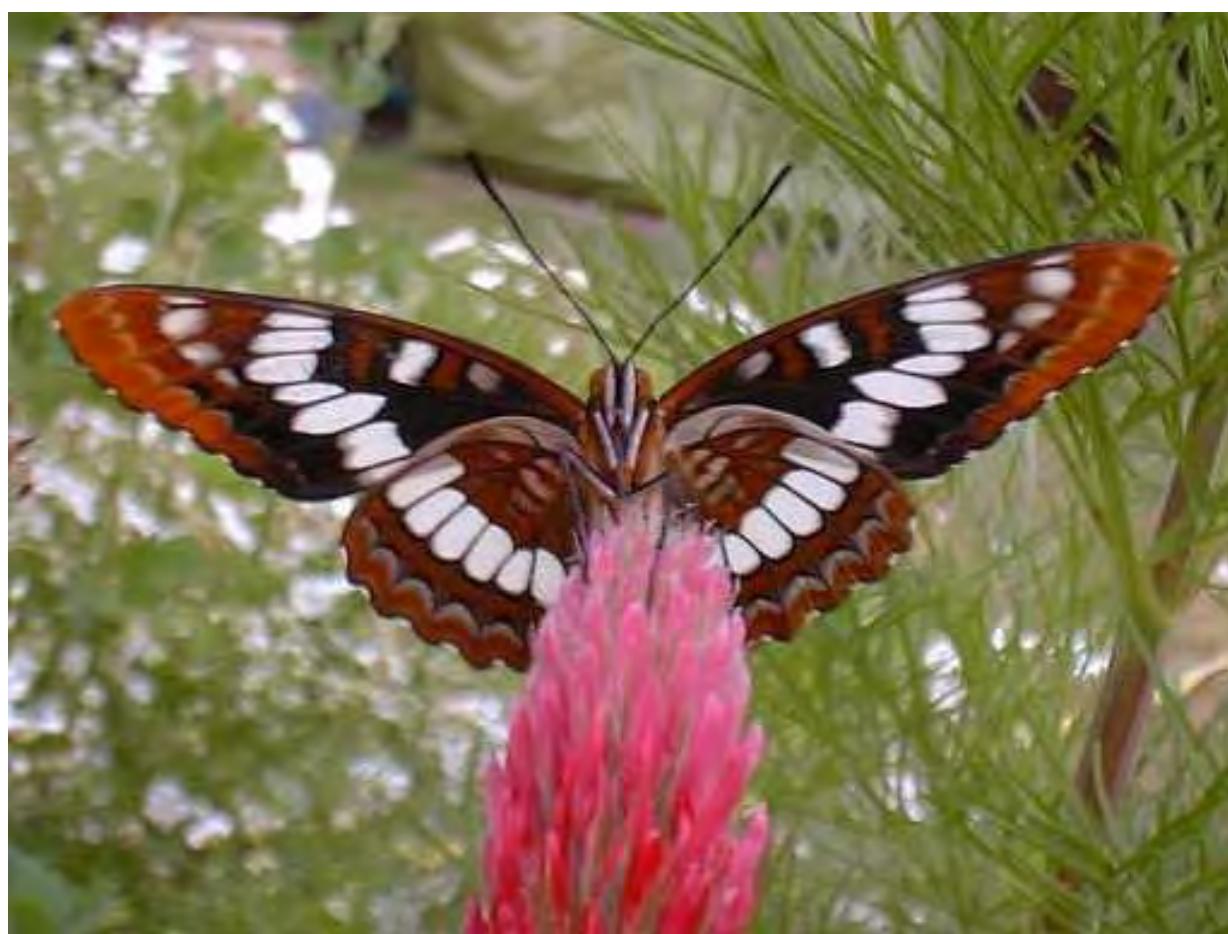


Fig:3. Lorquins Admiral nectaring on Clover.

Some facts about the butterflies.

Butterflies are one of the most sensitive creatures to habitat loss, and are great indicators to determine the health of an environment. It's a bit like the canary in a cage, that coal miners took down the pits many years ago to give the first indications of a gas build-up, they were an early warning to us, just as the butterflies are to us today on the surface!

Here's a thought for our older enthusiasts, just think back to your youth, there were so many more butterflies around for us to enjoy in our gardens! Our great-grandparents, if they could return to our modern world, would certainly be amazed by the lack of butterflies today. We should be concerned about this.

Many years ago, collecting and displaying dead butterflies was a common hobby and often blamed for the decline in numbers, the truth is that when collecting was a common hobby there were far more butterflies around than now. It is now accepted that it is habitat loss, combined with pesticides, and possible climate change, and not butterfly collectors, that have caused this dire situation.

This neat and tidy approach to our environment, combined with extensive use of herbicides and insecticides have decimated butterfly populations in recent years, and especially so in urban areas.

So at this point, I hope I hope we have stimulated your interest in doing something to reverse this, and at the same time enable you to have an even more enjoyable time when sitting in your garden!

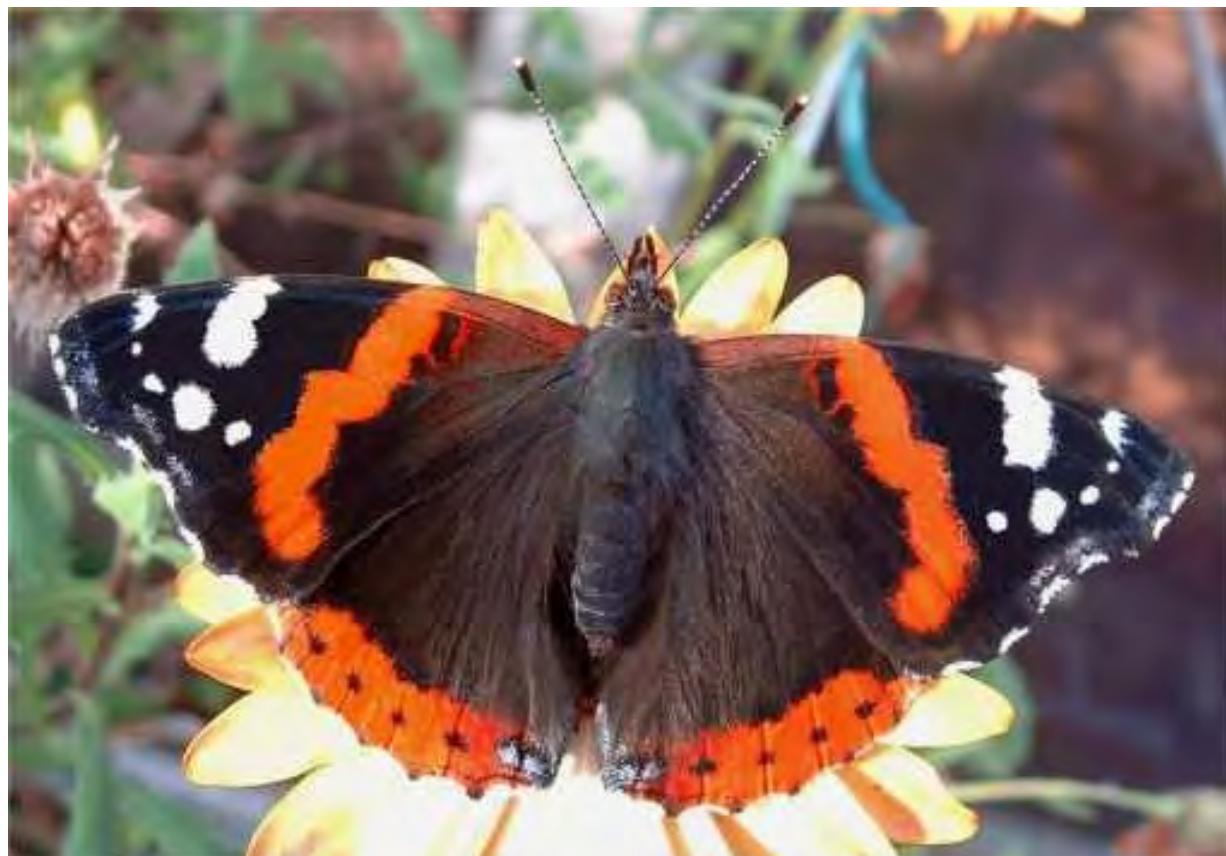


Fig:4. Red Admiral, a garden favourite. The caterpillars feed on Stinging Nettles.

What can we do to help?

Ok, time to look at reality, and how we, in our own small way, can work to reverse this problem. The aim of this booklet is to stimulate enough folk into action. It may seem to you, that by changing only your own garden, that this may not achieve much, but if enough folk change their way of gardening, combined we can all achieve a lot!

Does this mean I have to live in a jungle like garden?

Ok, we have to have a balance here, as none of us want to live in a tangled jungle, however, just by leaving a few areas to nature could make a huge difference. There are in fact many progressive thinking local authorities that are now starting to think this, (Not enough of them sadly!) So how can we help? We can make a huge difference by planting our gardens in a “Butterfly friendly” way. OK, don’t panic, as I said, I don’t expect you to leave your gardens entirely to nature, and create an overgrown jungle!

You can create the most lovely, neat garden, full of trees, shrubs and flowers, just by giving some thought to what types of species you plant in it!

Some initial steps to success:

For some reason we seem to be obsessed with non-native trees and flowers from other countries and regions. Of course many of these are in fact beautiful additions to our environment, but do we ever think if this is the same as our local wildlife sees it? We humans always think “the grass is greener somewhere else” and probably plant a lot more exotic plants than natives. The reality is of course, that many of these foreign imports are totally unsuitable for our local wildlife. So what we see as beautiful trees, shrubs and flowers, are in fact, in many cases a desert for our local wildlife.



Fig:5. Pale Tiger Swallowtail nectaring on the non-native Mexican Mock Orange (*Choisya ternata*)

A little thought before planting.

Time for a step back and think a little about what I just wrote about exotic and non-native plants, and in fact not all are bad for the garden! This next section is about using flower species, that can provide both nectar for the butterflies to feed on and double up as hostplants for the caterpillars to eat! (A hostplant, is a plant that the butterfly lays its eggs on

and the caterpillars feed on the leaves.) Like so many things in life, we are aiming for a balance here. There are, in fact, many beautiful non-native flowers that are wonderful nectar plants, and also many non-native hostplants, that are perfect as a source of food for our caterpillars to feed on. Just a little careful thought and selection before you plant, can make all the difference between a desert and a banquet for our butterflies.

The balance is that unless we can provide native hostplants, or acceptable non-native/ exotic alternatives for both the butterflies and their caterpillars to feed on, there will be fewer butterflies. Why, because remember that without the butterfly caterpillars there will be no butterflies, and of course no butterflies to enjoy your flowers in your garden.

So here's one final point before we move on. Many folk think that caterpillars are complete pests and will eat to the ground any plant you put in your garden. In fact butterflies are extremely selective and choosy on which plant their caterpillars will feed on. If you put a young caterpillar on an unsuitable hostplant, it will starve to death without even taking a nibble from the leaf!



Fig:6. Monarch nectaring on Verbena

The First Steps

So what about the size of your garden? Many folk are often put off from creating a butterfly garden because they only have a small plot. Of course the butterflies don't observe boundary lines, and as they flutter through your neighbourhood, even your own small butterfly garden will be seen as a "Nice place to stay" regardless of your neighbours layout. So don't worry, you can still be a successful butterfly gardener on the smallest of plots, even if you only have room for a window box or a few pots.

Once a female butterfly has paired, it spends the rest of its life feeding from flowers and laying eggs. It is amazing how good a botanist a female butterfly is, and she almost never gets

it wrong, consistently laying her eggs on the correct hostplant for her caterpillars to thrive. I'm sure you will have seen problems in your garden before, where caterpillars have stripped the plants. This is almost certainly the work of Moths, Sawflies, Beetles and other insects which can do much damage to a plant. This is very rarely ever a problem with butterflies, as females generally lay a very few or even just a single egg on a plant and then fly on to other plants. So most butterfly caterpillars can spend their life in your garden, and unless you look hard for them, they will remain unnoticed. There are a few exceptions of course, and we'll discuss this in more detail under the heading, "The Species," in a later section.

As one would expect, the range and types of butterflies likely to be living in your own area can vary greatly depending on your climate. So first do some detective work, visit the internet for a great source of information, buy a book, or visit your local library and borrow a book on butterflies. All these options will give you a distribution for each species and a time of year when you are most likely to see them where you live.

Don't be put off by seeing the hundreds of different species that are in the book! Remember your aim is only to try and get some pretty butterflies flying in your garden, and not try and save the population of every butterfly species in the country! But here's a thought, if enough people create a butterfly garden in many different places around the country, they, in turn, will be helping butterflies too, so it's a case of "Doing your bit!" You can make a difference, and many of us together can make a big difference!



Fig:7. Sulphurs are a fine sight at flowers, the males are especially beautiful. The caterpillars only eat Clovers, so will not eat your other plants!

Now lets turn to the butterflies, what types should you try and attract to your garden? Like many things in life, it's best to start off by keeping things simple. As your enthusiasm grows, you can become more adventurous, and by then you'll probably be known as the local butterfly expert!

The Butterflies

So we'll start off with some butterfly families that are fairly easy to attract, and give a great splash of colour to your garden. I'll also suggest some great plants for you to try. Remember, as I wrote earlier, butterflies generally only lay a few eggs on a plant, so don't worry, your garden will not be decimated with millions of caterpillar eating everything you have planted!

(Note that the common names of the butterflies and plants are followed by their Latin/Scientific name below, and this will help you get a greater range of hits when doing an Internet search on the species)

The Monarch. (*Danaus plexippus*)

Fig:8. Monarchs pairing, the smaller female is hanging below the male.

Of course everyone knows the Monarch and its amazing life history, which starts and ends with a migration north and a return migration south. Many of you will have seen these butterflies in your garden during their journey. Their large size and bright Red/brown and black striped wings are a real eye catcher. There is also a similar, but more tropical species called the Queen, (*Danaus gilippus*) however, unless you live in the warmer south of the country, you are unlikely to see it! This does not matter as the caterpillars of both these butterflies feed on the same hostplant, Milkweed. If you have Milkweed growing in your garden, you are sure to attract Monarchs!

Milkweeds belong to a large family of plants (*Asclepias*), with many different species having a great variation range of habitats and different climatic conditions. You may have noticed your own local wild Milkweeds in the fall, when they release fluffy, silky seeds from their seed pods. These wild Milkweeds have attractive flowers that come in a wide range of colors, and some can grow quite big and ungainly. Why not try some other beautiful cultivated varieties suitable for your garden?

Recommendations:**Tropical Milkweed or Blood Flower (*Asclepias curassivacia*)**

Tropical Milkweed has the most lovely yellow and red flowers, grows no more than 3ft tall, (occasionally in exceptional conditions to 4ft.) This plant is a perennial but don't worry if you don't live in the tropics, just treat it as an annual, as it will die when the frosts arrive in colder regions. Tropical Milkweed is easily available as seed, and you should have no problems finding a supplier.



Fig:9. The beautiful nectar-filled flowers of Tropical Milkweed.

The seeds germinate very quickly when planted in a pot in some good quality compost. And it is worth getting a good-sized bag of this compost from your local garden centre, and use it for all the other seeds you will like to plant. Put a few pebbles into the bottom of a 10 inch pot. (The pebbles will ensure good drainage) and then fill with compost. Soak the pot and allow any excess water to drain off and then poke some holes about 2 inches apart and 1 inch deep. Drop a seed into each hole and cover them with compost. Germination time is fast if you keep them fairly warm at a comfortable "inside your house temperature" they will be up in only a week to 10 days. If you have a warm bright window-sill to put them on, that's perfect, but any bright spot inside your house will be fine. The seedlings will grow quickly, and can be planted out in your garden when they reach around 4 inches high as long as you are not expecting a late frost where you live. This height is not critical, and if you find you planted them a little too early in the year for your own local climate, just let them grow taller until the last frost has past before planting them. The best way to transplant the seedlings is to use a stable flat surface, an old tray is perfect, and gently turn the pot on the side to loosen the compost, and then gently shake the compost out of the pot. Often the compost will collapse as you do this, but don't worry, even if some of the seedlings lose all the soil around their roots, they transplant so easily you will not have a problem.



Fig:10. Tropical Milkweed also comes as a yellow variety, you may like to mix both varieties in your garden.

As these plants will grow to around 3ft (or sometimes a little more) think about where you will put them in your garden. Often towards the back of a flower bed is the best option and this allows other smaller flowers/plants to be seen at the front of the bed. (See some planting and layout diagrams at the end of this booklet to help you decide where to put them) As for planting the seedlings, you will now have a number of seedlings that may or may not have any compost attached to their roots. Not a problem, I generally found it best to just loosen the soil where I want to put them, (for example into an existing bed) and then either use a "Dibber" or an old broom handle to poke holes in the soil.

Now plant the seedlings! If they have enough compost sticking to their roots, I just drop them into the hole, and use a little compost to firm them into the ground. If the seedlings are now bare-rooted, I lay them on their side by the hole, and gently work the roots to the bottom of the hole with a Popsicle-stick, lift them vertical and then firm them into the ground with little compost. Either way they will be fine. Keep them well watered until established, but even if they wilt a bit for the first day or so they will pick up and start to grow. If you can provide a little shade, especially if it is hot and sunny you can do so, but it is not vital. All you now have to do is ensure you they receive some water and wait!

This beautiful flower will start to bloom in only 8 weeks after transplanting, and apart from being a wonderful addition to your garden, the flowers drip with nectar, which will also attract butterflies from many different families, and not just Monarchs! This is a great option for a butterfly garden.

To continue growing this plant in the colder regions the following spring, just collect the seed-pods as they ripen. Wait until the pods are a greenish-yellow, and put them somewhere to dry out. To collect seeds from all the silky fluff, an old friend of mine from the UK, Bernie Farrell, had a great solution, which works perfectly. His recipe is, wait until the pods have dried enough and just started to split along the edges, then put them all in a plastic bag and knot the top. Pour yourself a glass of wine, sit in a comfortable spot in the garden and bash the plastic bag about, (Presumably stopping occasionally to sip your wine!) After a short time, you just take the plastic bag and cut a small hole in one corner, and you'll find all the seeds have collected there, now just pour out the seeds into a container. This method leaves all the silk and dead pods inside the bag that can just be put in the trash-can, and dry seeds ready to be stored for next season. Of course now you have seeds, you just start off again as already described. An easy way to store the seeds for the following season is to just pour them into an envelope, seal it shut, and you are ready to start the whole process again.



Fig:11. The beautiful white Monarch, a rare variation from the normal orange.

Plant maintenance in the growing season:

Tropical Milkweed has few pest problems, (discussed at the end of this section) and is extremely tolerant of a wide range of soils, and from wet to dry conditions. However for the best results, try and keep the plants from drying out too much, and they will be the better for it! This plant does grow well in a sunny spot or semi shade, but don't worry if you find this difficult, it will still do well in a fairly shady spot, but will not grow quite so tall or vigorous as in full sun. One final point about Tropical Milkweed, Monarch butterflies, when given the option, prefer this plant to all the other species for laying their eggs.

Swamp Milkweed or Rose Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)

This is a North American native plant and in its wild form, Swamp Milkweed has lovely pink flowers, and never grows more than 3ft tall. A perennial and you don't even need a swamp to grow it! Although it has thick fleshy roots adapted to grow in wet places and heavy damp soils, in my experience it does very well in even moderately dry soils. One big difference between this and Tropical Milkweed is that this plant is fully hardy, and will come up year after year. There are even some cultivars available from your seed supplier, and you can choose between pink, pink with deep red spots, and white flowers. Again you should have no problems finding a supplier.



Fig:12. Swamp Milkweed or Rose Milkweed. (*Asclepias incarnata*)

For those of you who would like to stick with native plants this may be the best option for you, however, in my experience, it does better in the mild to colder climates, than the hot sticky areas of the south. It takes longer to come into flower from seed than Tropical Milkweed and although it has a fairly long flowering period of about 3 months, in my view this is not such an attractive option. Tropical Milkweed will flower for up to 5 or 6 months continuously, or even longer depending on how early you have frost in the fall.

The cultivation procedures from seed are exactly the same as Tropical Milkweed, with the exception that this is a very hardy plant, and will be a perennial in your area. You may like to consider separating the roots and replanting them to propagate more plants the following spring as well as planting seeds. Again, you gather the seeds, (and in fact all Milkweed seeds) in the same "Plastic bag" method as described earlier.

Do consider planting this in your garden, and remember there are many cultivars developed for you to enjoy a mix of colors!

Swan Plant (*Asclepias fruticosa* or synonym *Gomphocarpus fruticosa*)

First a little explanation why you may find seeds of this plant under either of the Latin/Scientific names above. This plant is just another Milkweed that comes originally from Africa, and is so closely related to the New World Milkweeds that the Monarchs are quite happy to lay on it and the caterpillars eat it as enthusiastically as any other Milkweed. However, taxonomists (Who of course don't have to eat it!) think differently and have given it the awful Latin/Scientific name, "Gomphocarpus!" Having said that, just treat it as another Milkweed!

So why is it called the Swan Plant? Here's a picture of the seedpod, which later turns a golden yellow color as it ripens. It resembles a swan, (or a duck?)



Fig:13. The interesting seedpod of the Swan Plant, is it a Swan or a duck?

The Swan Plant is a native from Africa, and as mentioned before, it is really just another Milkweed that Monarch butterflies love to feed from the flowers and also lay their eggs on it for their caterpillars to develop.

This plant is a bit larger than the other Milkweeds previously discussed, and can develop into a shrub at around 7ft to 8ft tall in favourable conditions. It is surprisingly hardy, and can take frosty conditions without problems, as it grows at quite high altitudes in its native

country. Even as far north as the UK this plant can withstand the winter, and only loses a few leaves in extremely cold weather.

But this doesn't really matter as you can just treat it as an annual. If you would like it flowering in only a couple of months from transplanting the seedlings, you can treat it in exactly the same way as Tropical Milkweed described earlier.

Due to its size you may like to consider planting this plant at the back of a flower bed, to allow other smaller plants to be seen at the middle of the bed and the front.

One thing for sure, it is so unusual that you will get all your neighbours and friends asking you what this plant is called, and asking you for seeds, as it is a real eye-catcher! Maybe you can encourage these folk to garden in a butterfly friendly was at the same time? Every little helps!



Fig:14. The Swan Plant, showing plant, flowers and seed-pods.

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Fig 15: The Tropical Queen, similar to the Monarch, but you are unlikely to see it in your garden unless you live in the far south East of the U.S.

Milkweeds in general.

Monarch butterfly caterpillars will only feed on Milkweed, and without it, they would become extinct. It doesn't really matter so very much which type you choose to plant, the Monarchs will love it. Remember all Milkweeds have a lot of nectar, and are great for feeding just about all the butterflies you find in your area where you live.

The Milkweed species described so far in this booklet should be suitable wherever you live in the US, the far North or the deep South. But there are several other Milkweed species that may also do well in your own area depending on where you live. Some are rather ungainly and may not be the most elegant of garden plants, however you may like to make some enquiries to your local nature study/environmental groups to see which of these grows well in your area, and you may like to try some of these other species too.

Two other Milkweed species that may be of interest.

Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) is a perennial native to most of the US east of the Rocky Mountains. It likes a sandy soil and full sunshine. Growing to 6ft high, with quite large leaves and smallish flowers, it is not a popular garden plant, even though the Monarch butterflies love it! Note that this plant can become rather invasive in your garden! If you grow this plant and keep seed, the seeds will not germinate until they have experienced a cold period. A few months in the fridge will solve this problem. The roots are fully hardy to -30f.

Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) Is also a perennial native of Eastern US. It likes a dry gravelly, or sandy soil to do best, but there are a few cultivars developed to grow in wetter soils. It is far less invasive than Common Milkweed. Although it will grow to 3ft tall in favourable conditions, it is more common for it to grow to around 1ft to 2ft tall. This plant has a tuber or bulb, that can be divided to propagate more plants quite easily, however, again like Common Milkweed, you need to keep the seeds cold for a winter period before they will germinate. The tubers are fully hardy to -30f.

Recommendation.

If you want simplicity and minimum effort, It really is much easier to use Tropical Milkweed and/or Swan Plant in your garden. They are both very easy to grow, have beautiful flowers and the Monarchs love them both.

Milkweed Pests.



Fig:16. Milkweed Aphids. Best to just squish them with your fingers when you see them before they become too much of a problem!

There are not very many problems with pests when growing Milkweeds. The Milkweed beetle, and Milkweed Leaf Beetle can cause problems, best to hand pick them off when you

see them and they really won't eat all of your plants. The Milkweed Aphid is more of a pest as it can rapidly reproduce at a great speed and as a sap-sucker, the stems might wilt if action is not taken. I just usually squish them before they become too much of a problem, and Ladybugs will control them too of course.

The only problem with squishing these Aphids is that they have a bright yellow colored liquid inside, which makes your fingers look like you smoke 10 packs of cigarettes a day! Best wash your hands immediately, and this makes good sense whenever handling Milkweed too. If you casually wipe your eyes after picking or squeezing Milkweeds the sap can cause serious eye problems.

Spray or not to Spray?

It is of course much better if you can avoid spraying insecticides in your garden to avoid harming the butterfly caterpillars, and all books will tell you this. However, we do have to live in the real World, and there may be times when you need to take some action against pests on some of your existing plants. If you do have to spray, choose a windless day, or if you are lucky, with a gentle breeze blowing away from the Milkweeds and other hostplants you have planted. Try and get a fit-for-purpose insecticide, for example there are now some insecticides that will kill Aphids and do little harm to Ladybugs and butterfly caterpillars etc. Also look for a contact spray rather than a combined contact and systemic insecticide. A contact spray usually becomes ineffective after a day or so, while a systemic spray is absorbed by the plant and can remain effective for several weeks. And above all try to control the spray to the affected part of the plant only by using a sprayer with a longish spray extension that keeps the spray off you too! It's a bit of a mental struggle to decide if you have to spray or not, but if you do, and it does kill the caterpillars, more butterflies should arrive fairly quickly, and lay more eggs, and its better to have some butterflies, than none at all.



Fig:17. Full grown Monarch caterpillar looking for a place to turn into a pupa.



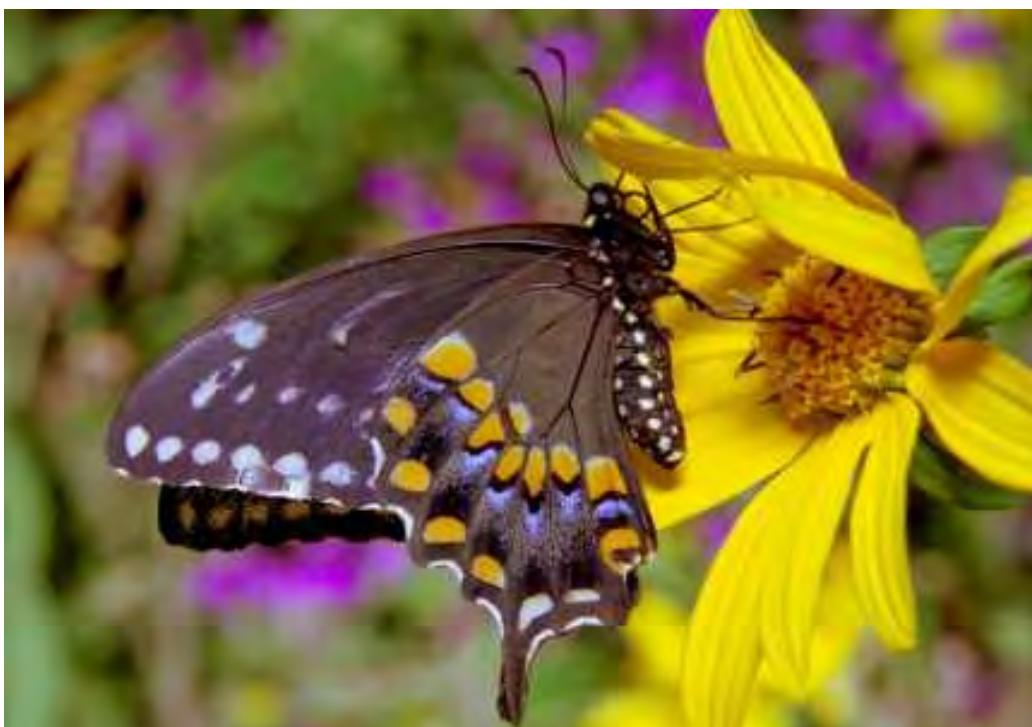
Fig:18. This picture shows a small Tropical Milkweed plant.

Above is a small Tropical Milkweed plant, showing flowers, seed pods, and split pods with seed. One more option! If you live in the warmer south of the US, you may find it a struggle to grow some of the northern native Milkweeds described, such as Swamp Milkweed, Common Milkweed and Butterfly Weed. You may like to try Purple Milkweed also called Heartleaf Milkweed (*Asclepias cordifolia*) This is one of the prettiest Violet/Purple flowering Milkweeds.

The Swallowtails.**Fig:19. Swallowtails feeding on Mud.**

The US is fortunately blessed in having many different species of Swallowtail butterflies. These are a special delight in the garden as they tend to flutter their wings as they feed from your flowers, never quite settling to feed like most other butterfly families do. Their large size and beautiful colors make them a real favourite to encourage into your garden.

Below is a beautiful picture of one of the most widely distributed Swallowtails in the US that occurs from North to the far South of the U.S. that you are certain to see in your garden.

**Fig:20. Black Swallowtail, (Papilio machaon).**

Swallowtails will visit a garden that has plenty of nectar plants, and the seed-pack that came with this course has been selected to encourage all butterflies into your garden to enjoy a good feed.

If you want to plant some of the Swallowtails hostplants, then they are quite varied, with each species selecting a particular plant to lay its eggs on. The caterpillars are a delight, and will not eat your garden flowers!

Here is a suggestion for some hostplants for the different species. The Black Swallowtail caterpillars mainly feed on plants from the Parsley Family, and a good choice is Fennel, a perennial plant that will come up year after year. They will of course also take Dill, a smaller relative of the fennel, but this only grows as an annual.

Garden Rue is also a favourite, and unusually will be used by both the Giant Swallowtail and the Black Swallowtail and several other related Swallowtails like the Old World Swallowtail.

Do keep an eye out for the Giant Swallowtail, it is the biggest Swallowtail species in the US, and occurs from the far South all the way north to southern Canada. It is much commoner in the south of its range than in the north where it becomes a more local and less widespread species. It sometimes can be a problem for Citrus farmers in the south of its range, but the caterpillar also eats Prickly Ash, Hop Tree and of course garden Rue as mentioned before.

One word of warning when handling Rue. This plant can sensitise your skin to sunlight, and although it can have a varying effect, you can find you develop a red to purple blotches on your skin and this can take a long time to go!



Fig:21. The Giant Swallowtail.



Fig:22. Old World Swallowtail, (Papilio machaon). This butterfly has a huge range around the Northern Hemisphere and is locally common in Europe.

The Tiger Swallowtails are spectacular!



Fig:23. Tiger Swallowtail,

The Tiger Swallowtail caterpillars feed on many different trees and shrubs, the favourites are Willow, Cottonwoods, Birches, Cherries, Ash and Tulip Poplar. Don't worry that the caterpillars will be stripping your prize garden trees, as Swallowtails lay their eggs individually. The females may lay a few eggs then fly on, and the caterpillars are often unnoticed by us in our gardens.

Other Swallowtails

There several other species of Swallowtails that you may find in your garden, and far too many to discuss in detail here. The photos shown here should help you identify many of the most likely species you will see in your garden, however, it is always nice to identify others, and a good butterfly guidebook, available from your local library will put you on the right track.

I do hope this guide has stimulated your interest in gardening in a butterfly friendly way. I am sure that you will soon see the results after planting these beautiful plants in your garden.

Nigel Venters

Two Texas Butterfly Enthusiasts in Grandmother's Butterfly Garden

