

## **BUTTERFLY GARDENING**

Butterfly Gardening can be defined as “the intentional planting and arrangement of specialized floral gardens with diverse nectar producing and larval food plants to attract colorful butterflies.”  
– Buchman & Nabhan, *Forgotten Pollinators*, 1996.

In addition to providing us with intense joy as we watch them flutter through our yards, butterflies contribute to the ecological balance of nature. The greatest threat to butterfly populations is the destruction of their habitats through urban and suburban development. By creating a butterfly garden, each of us can contribute to creating a habitat that is friendly to butterflies. Some butterfly gardening practices like avoiding the use of chemicals that are toxic to butterflies leads to a natural increase in population of other insects and wildlife in the garden, resulting in a more diverse habitat.

Creating a garden to attract butterflies is not only rewarding, but it is also fun and easy. Once created, the garden can sustain itself with very little maintenance. Once you know the diversity of butterflies in your neighborhood and have identified a location to plant your butterfly garden, designing the garden is very easy. Some things to consider when designing your garden are:

- Incorporate nectar and larval food plants
- Provide sources of shelter in the garden
- Select a variety of flower colors
- Choose plants of different heights
- Choose plants that bloom at different times of the year
- Plant clusters of the same variety

Creating a butterfly habitat in schools can be very rewarding. It reinforces the connection between nature and humans that tends to get lost in our technology-driven society. Butterfly gardening in schools will help develop this connectivity in children early on and promote future land stewardship. Some of the outcomes of creating a butterfly garden in schools are:

- Through hands-on activity, a butterfly garden will teach students the importance of the ecological partnership between plants and butterflies (and other insects).
- Scientific information that is sometimes hard to understand in a classroom setting can be reinforced through personal experience.
- Creates new learning opportunities for students with learning disabilities.
- Creates ownership among students.

