

Pollinator Plants for Gardens

Butterfly Plants

The following is a fairly comprehensive list of some the best plants for attracting butterflies to our gardens and towns.

Woody Shrubs/Small trees

***Buddlejas

Buddlejas are still the top plant for butterflies and are attractive summer flowering shrubs in their own right. Avoid planting the naturalised variety which tends to be a rogue and too big for most urban spaces. Instead search out some of the excellent colour varieties widely available in garden centres e.g. **B. Pink Delight** (huge pink trusses) **B. Royal Red** (dark purple), **Black Knight** (darkest purple and the hardiest Buddleja). **B. Blue Horizon** is a rarer variety with the darkest blue flowers all at the top of the foliage. **B. Dartmoor** for mammoth-size flower-heads. **B. 'Peace'** for white flowers.

******Buddleja X Weyeriana** Probably the TOP butterfly plant. This Buddleja does not invade and has a very long flowering season from July to November in the main garden butterfly season (Aug-Sep) As it is sterile this bush is perfectly safe in urban centres **B. Weyeriana Sungold** has the strongest yellow colour and is fragrant. **B. Bicolor** (two-toned colours), **B. Moonshine**, **B. Pink Pagoda** are other similar varieties all of which are safe in urbanscapes as they are sterile and with consequently long flowering seasons.

Smaller Buddlejas

There are many smaller Buddlejas bred for urban gardens now becoming more available.

*****Buddleja Pink Spreader** is a new variety with superb pink-red flower heads (source Longstock Nursery). ******Buddleja 'Miss Ruby'** and **B. 'Sugar plum'**– are new dwarf reddish-purple varieties growing to 5' after three years. ******Buddleja 'Adonis'** is semi-dwarf with very dark blue flower-heads. The Magic of Life Butterfly House has a number of its own smaller varieties, including the Rheidol series of **Buddleja Rheidol Red, Pink and Velvet**.

***Buddleja crispa** – rare but pretty pink species Buddleja – needs a wall for extra heat. Long flowering season. Non-invasive.

Buddleja management

Buddlejas flower slightly too early for the main garden butterfly season which is from August through to late September. Plant two and cut one back in late May to encourage it to flower in September. Or plant a **B. x Weyeriana** relative that flowers naturally in late summer alongside a **B. davidii** variety..

Scoring system

*** 'Magnet' status and often has a long-flowering season or other attractive traits.

** means the flowers are strongly attractive to pollinators but often with a shorter flowering season.

* flowers occasionally attract pollinators

Other woody butterfly plants..

***Willows** *Salix* – Spring nectar

****Viburnum farreri** – Winter nectar with long flowering season - a twiggy deciduous shrub for butterflies waking up on sunny winter days. Fragrant.

***Pieris** in the Heather family short season in early summer.

***Perennial Wallflower** – *Erysimum Bowle's Mauve* - low growing dwarf shrub, not a magnet but flowers virtually every month of the year. Attracts the Whites.

***Ivy** – Woody climber. Good late autumn nectar source

Unusual woody shrubs For those who want something different..

****Argentinian Escallonia** - *Escallonia bifida* attracts butterflies said to be a butterfly-magnet. Needs a wall for warmth or plant under a foliage canopy. Rare. (source: www.greatdixter.co.uk)

****Eupatorium ligustrinum** – Autumn flowering – slightly tender, bush

***Glory tree** - *Clerodendrum trichotomum* – Autumn flowering. A fine ornamental shrub eventually growing into a small tree. Some varieties bear bright blue berries.

***Button Bush** - *Cephalanthus occidentalis* is a little-known slow-growing shrub for damp places.

***Seven Son Flower of Zheijiang** - *Heptacodium miconioides* – small white flowers in Autumn

***Chaste Tree** - *Vitex agnus-castus* – Autumn flowering..similar aspect to a Buddleja but slower-growing. A noble shrub.

And four little-known trees in the Heather family..

***Grecian Strawberry tree** - *Arbutus x andrachnoides*. (source: www.panglobalplants.com)
Spring flowering, highly ornamental bark. A good candidate for a street tree.

***Strawberry Tree** – *Arbutus unedo* – flowering in Autumn and with strawberry-like fruits the following year.

***Sourwood** – *Oxydendrum arboreum* – summer flowering, red leaves in Autumn

***Clethra** – summer flowering

Herbaceous Perennials

*****Verbena bonariensis** – flowers from June to November. A little tender but excellent butterfly plant.

*****Red Valerian** – *Centranthus ruber* – flowers in early Summer and again late Autumn. Usually grows naturalised on walls.

***Forget-me-nots** – annual – Spring. April – 20 cm high.

***Scilla** – blue flowering bulbs flowering very early March/April

***Aubrietia** – common trailing perennial for walls. Spring flowering. Attracts whites.

***Bugle** – *Ajuga reptans* Ground cover and good for early spring butterflies and rarer fritillaries.

***Dame's Hesperis** – *Hesperis matronalis* – visited by The Whites (Pierids) and doubles as a caterpillar food plant for The Orange tip butterfly.

***Vipers Bugloss** *Echium vulgare* native, biennial/perennial to 1m high, very long flowering season from June to November. Sow seed on bare ground in summer..to flower the next season.

*****Bupthalmum speciosum** - large herbaceous perennial with yellow sunflower-like flowers. Excellent. mid to back of the border.

Most Daisy relatives that are single flowered *Dahlias*, *Helianthus 'Lemon Queen'*, *Helenium*, *Rudbeckia* (now including *Echinacea*). Virtually all thistles. *Cirsium rivulare* – Japanese thistle.

***Teasel** and ***Scabious** relatives

Most ****Mints** (*Mentha*) and their relatives ****Lavender** ****Marjoram**, ****Hyssop**, ***Rosemary** and **Thyme**.

*****Korean Mint** – *Agastache rugosa* for one a mint that isn't invasive.

*****Eupatorium purpureum- Joe Pye Weed**. A true magnet for butterflies flowering in September. Back of the border plant.

****Heather** e.g. *Erica* – ground cover and you can pick your season.

***Loosestrife** – *Lythrum virgatum*. Highly attractive long-flowering native. Occasionally attracting Whites and the Brimstone butterfly.

***Polygonum/Persicaria** – ground cover and higher.

*****Ice plant** *Sedum spectabile* – a magnet in the Autumn for butterflies

****Asters** (now *Symphotrichum*) excellent nectar in the Autumn for butterflies.

Bees and Bumblebees

Compared with butterfly nectar plants, there are many more bee plants to choose from for putting in our gardens.

Willows *Salix – Spring nectar

***Forget-me-nots** – annual – self seed April – 20 cm high.

****Bugle – *Ajuga reptans*** – adored by bees, bumblebees and butterflies. Ground cover

****Cotoneaster** – Flowers May – covers walls or unsightly objects

*****Common Vipers Bugloss *Echium vulgare*** - native, biennial/perennial to 1m high, very long flowering season from June to November hence 3 stars – self seeds. A top bee plant.

*****Vipers Bugloss *Echium plantagineum*** – low growing carpeting annual or trailing plant, very long flowering season from June to November – first class pollinator plant for hanging baskets or town containers.

****Other Bugloss relatives** such as ****Comfrey** – excellent but can be invasive.. e.g. **Blue ensign** in spring, **Borage** and **Phacelia** – good *en masse* but difficult to start off..

*****Alder Buckthorn – *Frangula alnus*** a native bush or clipped hedge plant. Excellent for Hymenoptera – bees, wasps and solitary wasps. Flowers virtually all growing season. Also caterpillar food plant of the Brimstone butterfly. Otherwise fairly non-descript.

*** **Most Mints and their relatives.** *****Korean Mint – *Agastache rugosa*** for one that isn't invasive. **Lavender, Marjoram, Hyssop, Thyme** Also **Clary Sage, Monarda, Phlomis russelliana** – a classic looking border plant flowering in June.

Most Geraniums – choose long flowered varieties ..e.g. **Roxanne, Patricia & *G. pratense*

****Most Heather relatives e.g. *Erica*** – ground cover and can pick your season. ***Pieris*** is a commonly available shrub/small tree. ***Enkianthus***, Blueberries, Rhododendrons and Azaleas are readily available shrubs in this family. *****Oxydendrum*** and *****Clethra*** are rarely grown woody shrubs but excellent for bees.

Most Daisy relatives that are single flowered. ***Dahlias***, *****Bupthalmum***, *****Helianthus 'Lemon Queen'***, ***Helenium***, ****Rudbeckia***, *****Echinops***

** **Hemp agrimony - *Eupatorium cannabinum*** a native herbaceous perennial flowering in summer

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*****Joe-Pye Weed - *Eupatorium purpureum*** - a true magnet flowering in September

****All Thistles** ******Cirsium rivulare*** is a stately-looking thistle with few spines. From Japan.

****Polygonum/Persicaria*** – ground cover and higher. Summer and Autumn.

******Eucryphia* sp.** – For rare tree lovers, this genus has wreaths of large white flowers in late Summer/Autumn. Acid soils – Adored by bees.

****Bee-bee Tree - *Tetradium danielli*** – the eponymous tree in the Citrus family that has small flowers attractive to bees. Fully hardy.

Tea Tree – *Leptospermum – shrub loved by bees, needs shelter.

***Lime trees – *Tilia* sp.**

All species are loved by bees but has short flowering season in mid summer. A little-known species with highly attractive leaves is ***Tilia henryana***.

****Escallonia* sp.** – good for hedges

****Nasturtium** – good for bees and colour for town containers and hanging baskets.

******Verbena bonariensis*** – flowers from June to November. A little tender but excellent insect plant.

*****Caryopteris* sp.** – late summer

****Aruncus dioicus*** – early summer

****Rodgersia pinnata***

For longer-tongues bumblebees such as the Garden Bumblebee (*Bombus hortorum*): Plant Foxgloves, Evening primrose, Honeysuckle, Antirrhinum, Red Clover (too long for honey bees which have a tongue 7mm long).

Hoverfly and Fly plants

Flies and hoverflies are important for feeding and attracting many of our birds such as wrens, robins, house martins

*****Carrot family eg. *Angelica*, *Fennel*, *Carum*** (Hogweed is excellent but sap is extremely toxic in sunlight so not recommended)

*****Ragwort**

*****Hemp Agrimony**

***Cosmos**

****Sedum**