



ATTRACTING BIRDS AND BUTTERFLIES TO YOUR GARDEN USING NATIVE PLANTS

To attract birds, butterflies and other wildlife to your garden, you obviously need to have trees and shrubs (preferably native) with flowers and fruits. So you planted a nice native shrub with flowers right in the middle of the front yard, and you still don't see any creatures? Consider these ideas:

Diversify. Have a wide variety of species to provide year-round food and cover. Use plants of various heights and with various color of flowers.

Cater to every taste. Most native plants listed as "wildlife attracting" have fruits, nectar or pollen eaten by birds or butterflies. However, insect-eating birds need plants which attract tiny insects (for example, a wild tamarind, *Lysiloma latisiliquum*, in flower). Piles of branches and even dead twigs area also provide shelter for insects which are eaten by birds (and may also be beneficial insects, such as pollinators).

Feed the baby. To have adult butterflies, the species-specific larval food plants need to be available. Remember that larval food plants may sometimes be denuded by hungry caterpillars!

Spare that weed. Leaving some native "weeds" in your garden (such as Spanish needle, *Bidens spp.*), helps ensure that there is something in bloom for butterflies to nectar on. Some weeds are also butterfly larval foods.

Go organic. Don't use pesticides. Leave insects to be food for birds or other creatures (including beneficial predator insects) or try to control in ways that won't harm other wildlife. (See the UF/IFAS Extension, Florida-Friendly Landscaping Program, <https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/>, for information.)

Make a hiding place. Have areas where plants are close and dense, to provide birds with cover from the elements and predators. Trees and shrubs which keep dense foliage all year, such as pigeon plum (*Coccoloba diversifolia*), are especially valuable. Piles of brush can also be havens for wildlife.

Give them a drink. If you can't create a pond, use a large plant saucer, filled with water with some rocks in it, for birds and a dish of wet sand for butterflies.

Plant a firebush. Everybody loves *Hamelia patens* with its orange flowers and plentiful berries - birds, butterflies and people!

Leave a snag. Removing a tree or tall shrub? Consider leaving a tall stump in its place. As the stump decays, it will provide a perch as well as a home for insects that feed woodpeckers.

Also see the **Florida Native Plant Society** (www.fnps.org/home/) for resources and publications, including https://www.fnps.org/assets/pdf/pubs/fnps-attracting-wildlife_flyer.pdf.

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