

## BELL COUNTY MASTER GARDENER

### Tip of the Week

#### Gardening for Butterflies

by Mary Lew Quesinberry

There are four stages to a butterfly's life: egg, larva, pupa and adult. Depending on the species, the life cycle of a butterfly can take from months to a year.

Spraying pesticides at any time of year can be deadly to the butterfly life cycle, so remember to keep your garden pesticide free. Some butterflies you will see in Bell County are Monarch, Queen, Gulf fritillary, Skippers, Swallowtail, Sulphur, and Whites and Admiral.

When butterflies are in their caterpillar stage they like to dine on dill, celery and carrot so you may want to plant a few extra of these plants in your garden to share with them. You may want a few "weeds" in your garden like red and white clover, milkweed and Queen Ann's Lace. Caterpillars also like hollyhock, sunflower, aster, mallow, ruellia, passion vine and oak.

Adult butterflies search for nectar rich plants and a mass planting of Gregg's Blue Mistflower (*Eupatorium greggii*), Blue Mist Caryopteris or *Salvia greggii* will result in a frenzy of butterfly activity. Plant nectar rich plants in groups rather than a single plant to make them easier for the butterflies to find.

Other plants rich in nectar are Black-eyed Susan, (*Rudbeckia hirta*), Lavender, Purple Cone Flower (*Echinacea purpurea*), Bee Balm (*Monarda didyma*), Gayfeather (*Liatris spicata*), Aster, Verbena (*Verbena bipinnatifida*), Goldenrod (*Solidago*), Lobelia, Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), Butterfly Bush (*Buddleia davidii*), Columbine (*Aquilegia*) and Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*).

Butterflies get water from nectar and moist surfaces. Your child or grandchild can help butterflies find water by providing a shallow terra cotta saucer or a pie pan filled with sand and water. Young male butterflies like mud puddles because they need water and the minerals that the mud provides.

Plan for wildlife when planting your garden. The beauty of your garden is enhanced by the grace and movement that wildlife provides. Nothing is more enchanting than a butterfly ballet over nectar rich plants.

Have any Questions? Contact [ask.bcmga@gmail.com](mailto:ask.bcmga@gmail.com)

In the photo: A Queen butterfly visits Beebrush (*Aloysia gratissima*). This vanilla scented, native shrub will fill your garden with perfume and a ballet of bees and butterflies.

