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Blooms for the Butterflies

By Lydia Holley, Master Gardener



love.

Since butterflies need to eat during the summer, it is no surprise Mother Nature provides plants that continue to bloom, even through the worst summer weather. Salvias, also called sage, have the perfect flower shape to lure hummingbirds and butterflies to your garden. There are numerous perennial and annual salvias. They come in a variety of colors, from stunning red to cool blue. Plant them in a large group for the best effect.

Lantana are commonly used because they are such hard-working bloomers in the Texas heat. They are also deer resistant, which is comforting to know if your garden is ravaged by deer each year. Lantana camara has gained an undesirable reputation, so you may wish to look for Lantana urticoides, a Texas native, known by the common name Texas lantana.

Gardeners take comfort in September's arrival. It signals the start of returning rain and cooler days. August, the month of brutality, the month of anxiety over summer's drought, the month of plants wilting in the scorching sun, is finally over.

But some plants enjoy the heat. As I walked around my garden last week, I noticed several plants continuing to bloom despite the high temperatures and drought conditions. Salvias, lantana, Gregg's mistflower (*Conoclinium coelestinum*), and turk's cap (*Malvariscus arboreus*) looked fresh and sassy, unfazed by the heat. Then it dawned on me: these are plants butterflies

Gregg's mistflower will spread to form a group, so you can start with just a few clumps and let it take over an area. It's lavender color looks refreshing in the heat. This native plant will also tolerate some shade. It has a reputation for being one of the best butterfly-attracting perennials.

Turk's cap is another Texas native which tolerates shade or will grow well in full sun. Give it plenty of room to grow. Then, sit back and enjoy the way the odd-shaped flowers attract hummingbirds and butterflies.

There are many other perennials and annuals that bloom throughout the summer and will attract hummingbirds and butterflies. Fill your landscape with them and watch the butterflies converge upon your garden.

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