

Habitat Recipe for Butterflies in your local Bayside Garden

Butterflies love nectar! The more flowers, the more butterflies, but remember butterflies spend much of their lives as caterpillars. We need to supply a good crop of plants for the caterpillars to grow on and turn (metamorphose) into the myriad species of butterflies, particularly native butterflies.

Native Australian caterpillars are not known to be unduly harmful to garden plants. It is the caterpillars of moths and the introduced cabbage white butterfly that do the real damage. So before squashing that caterpillar, make sure you know what beautiful butterfly might develop from it - it could be a native butterfly. Websites can often help match common butterflies to their caterpillars.

Plants advertise their nectar to butterflies, birds, and insects through scent, shape and colour. Their sole reason is for the transfer of pollen to promote further generations of their particular species.

Butterflies use vision and shape. They have excellent colour vision, including the infra-red spectrum and like humans, certain butterflies prefer certain colours. Favourite colours are blue, yellow or red.

Typical butterfly attracting flowers have their nectar deep inside a tube or groove which suits the long sticky tongue of a butterfly. These can also serve to inhibit some larger insects and larger birds from stealing the nectar. Like all animals, conserving energy is important, therefore butterflies prefer mass numbers of small flowers in a single stalk like xanthorea plants or flat surfaces around a single nectar container such as daisies.

There is no need to destroy exotic plants known to be beneficial to native butterflies as long as the plants are kept under control from invasion into nearby parks and heathlands. Some such plants are camphor laurel, buddleia, milkweed and citrus trees. These exotic plants tend to be related to the traditional indigenous food plants of native butterflies. Therefore, consider native plants of the Bayside region from those exotic plant families to support your local butterflies.

There is some trial and error as to what plant will survive in your garden as we have altered our garden soils over time from the original, as set out in Live Bayside Plant Bayside P.5. Choose plants according to whether they will tolerate shade, moisture, sun or dry areas. Native plants do require single deep watering from time to time to help establish strong deep root systems until they show signs of good growth and robustness.

As a general rule, the following plant layers supply a variety of food and habitat for many and various butterflies, but also to birds, skinks, insects and bugs, microbats

and invertebrates.

Trees: Wattles (*Acacia* sp. including small and larger),
Allocasuarina sp, *melaleuca* sp. and *banksia* sp.

Shrubs: *Bossaia* sp, *Bursaria* sp, *Correa* sp, Bottlebrushes (*Callistemon* sp), Hop
Goodenia, *Hakea* sp, *Pimelia* sp, *Boobialla* (*Myoporum* sp), Bush Peas (*Pultenaea*
sp) and Kangaroo Apples (*Solanum* sp)

Ground Covers: Purple Coral Pea (*Hardenbergia violacea*), *Kennedia* sp (Running
Postman) and Native Violet (*Viola hederacea*)

Grasses: *Lomandra* sp, *Poa* sp, *Dianella* and and sedges.

Climbers: *Clematis* sp, Common Appleberry (*Billardiera*)

Wildflowers: Just about all of them!

Bayside's local Community Indigenous Nursery have good supplies of native plants
best suited to the area.

References:

Attracting Butterflies to your Garden, Densy Clyne, 2000 by Reed New Holland

Indigenous Plants of the Sandbelt: A Gardening Guide for South-eastern
Melbourne, Rob Scott, et al, Earthcare St Kilda, October 2002

Live Bayside Plant Bayside, Bayside City Council, Green Gecko Publications

australianmuseum.net.au

<https://museumvictoria.com.au/bioinformatics/butterflies>

More Information

<https://www.bayfonw.org.au/g4ws/butterflies>