

## ABOUT BUTTERFLY GARDENING

Pesticides and environmental changes reduce the availability of good, natural butterfly habitat daily. As more people become aware of this problem, landscaping ideas can be rethought to attract and conserve butterflies. Successful butterfly gardens feature the two types of native plants needed by butterflies - host plants to provide sites for egg-laying and food for the young caterpillars and nectar plants to feed the adults. Butterfly gardens must be based on butterfly preferences, not human ones.



Many caterpillars will only eat one species of plant so it is crucial to choose the right plants for your garden to attract the butterflies native to your area. As they fly about, adults use their highly developed sense of smell to ensure they lay their eggs on the correct plants. When space is limited, look for plants that provide larval hosts for several species.

Nectar plants provide the sugars that adult butterflies need for nourishment and energy. Color, fragrance and shape all play a role in attracting butterflies. In general, brightly colored simple flowers with wide perching platforms attract the most species. Flowers with scent usually provide the most nectar. Typically, large butterflies nectar from large flowers and small butterflies nectar from small flowers.

## BUTTERFLY PLANTS AT BAHIA HONDA

**Bay Cedar** (*Suriana maritima*) is a good windbreak and a salt tolerant shrub. It flowers and fruits all year and is the larval food of some of the hairstreaks. Many butterflies visit its small yellow flowers.

**Blackbead** (*Pithecellobium keyense*) is the preferred larval food for the Orange Giant sulfur and is also a nectar plant for several species of adult butterflies, particularly skippers. The downy, globular flowers are very fragrant and pinkish or cream in color.



Blue Porterweed

**Blue Porterweed** (*Stachytarpheta jamaicensis*) is a shrubby, tropical herb that forms bushy mounds with long spikes bearing blue flowers. It is an extremely attractive nectar source. Black Mangrove Buckeyes use this and black mangroves for their larval food.

**Gumbo-Limbo** (*Bursera simaruba*) provides a larval food source for a number of species. A large shade tree with red peeling bark, it can reach heights of 40 feet and is easily propagated by placing cuttings directly in the soil.

**Jamaican Dogwood** (*Piscidia piscipula*) grows to a height of 50 feet and has gray-green scaly bark which along with the leaves, roots, and twigs was once used to stupefy fish and help in their capture. It is a host plant for the Cassius Blue and its fragrant flowers provide a good nectar source for adults.

**Lantana** (*Lantana involucrata*) grows to about five feet and thrives in central and southern Florida. The fragrant flowers are white to lavender and the fruit is a purple drupe. Atala butterflies particularly relish lantana nectar.

**Limber Caper** (*Capparis flexuosa*) a shrub or small tree can grow to 20 feet. The fragrant flowers attract many species of butterflies and the Florida White uses it as its larval food plant.

**Passionflower** (*Passiflora suberosa*) is the preferred larval food plant of several species including Julias, Gulf Fritillaries and Zebra Longwings. The latter lay their eggs exclusively on this plant and their caterpillars can decimate the leaves. In defense, the plant has developed poisons in its foliage and can grow fake "eggs" on its stem. If a female butterfly sees these she will fly on without laying her own eggs.



Scorpion Tail

**Scorpion Tail** (*Heliotropium angiospermum*) attracts small butterflies such as hairstreaks, crescents and skippers with its curled spikes of white flowers. An upright tropical, shrubby annual, it tolerates salt well.

**Sea Daisy** (*Borrchia frutescens*) and **Sea Oxeye Daisy** (*Borrchia arborescens*) provide nectar sources. The latter assumes a small tree-like form and has composite flower heads that resemble small sunflowers. Sea Daisy is very similar but the phyllaries, or leaf-like bracts of the flowers, are tipped with sharp spines and curve outward and down.

**Seven Year Apple** (*Casasia clusiifolia*) has fragrant, star-shaped, white flowers throughout the year, providing a good nectar source for adults. The egg-shaped fruit is green and hard until it ripens, and then turns black and prune-like. It is said to taste like dried apples. The leathery leaves are evergreen and resemble the southern magnolia.

Florida State Parks are in various stages of accessibility, and are working to improve access to services and facilities. Should you need assistance to enable your full participation, please contact the Park Office as soon as possible.

# Wings & Waves Butterfly Garden Bahia Honda State Park

MM 36.85 US 1 Florida Keys



Spanish Needle

**Spanish Needle** (*Bidens alba*) is a prevalent wildflower in the park that attracts many different types of butterflies, including Queens, Gulf Fritillaries, and White Peacocks. It provides larval food for the Dainty Sulfur. The small daisy-like flowers are produced all year and its sharp needle-like seeds easily cling to people and animals and are dispersed to new areas.

**Yellowtop** (*Flaveria linearis*) is a semi-shrubby, perennial herb that has small golden-yellow flower heads and provides nectar for adults. They bloom from March to December.

**Wild Poinsettia** (*Poinsettia cyathophora*) is a nectar and larval food plant. It is a perennial herb with narrow, linear leaves that are often partly or entirely red, resembling the cultivated poinsettia on a reduced scale. They flower all year and can be found along roadsides, in hammocks and throughout coastal sites.

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