Create A
Butterfly Bistro

by Jason Neumann and Molly Sterling

Think about your favorite restaurant. What do you like about it? Just as the management of a restaurant creates enticing features and menu items that keep you coming back, you can turn your yard into an attractive bistro for butterflies as well.

Here are some tips:

- **Advertise.** Make your flower beds easy to locate by planting flowers in large diverse groups.
- **Create ambiance.** Provide shelter from the wind as well as cover such as shrubs, shade trees and log piles. Place landing pads and sunbathing perches in open, sunny areas.
- **Stay “open” all season.** Grow nectar plants that bloom throughout the season to provide tasty nectar options for butterflies from spring through fall.
- **Offer something for everyone.** The bill of fare of plants you offer should cater to all different tastes, including both a “main menu” of nectar plants for adult butterflies and a “kids’ menu” of host plants for caterpillars.
- **Select flowers that vary in color, height and structure to attract a variety of butterfly species.** Stick with wild strains of native plants. Cultivated varieties of native plants are sometimes selected based on ornamental traits, not their usefulness as nectar plants. Avoid varieties whose flowers are radically different in shape or color. Open-pollinated natives are also more genetically diverse than cultivars making them more resistant to disease.
- **Satisfy caterpillars with a customized Kids’ Menu.** Caterpillars, like human children, are picky eaters. Host plants provide larval butterflies with nutrients, energy, and sometimes even protection from predators. Each caterpillar species will feed on a select few plant species. Monarchs need milkweed and the spicebush swallowtails require sassafras or spicebush. There are countless caterpillar-host relationships that might appear in a well-planted garden.

With a good design, your backyard bistro will be filled with colorful flowers and elegantly-dressed butterfly guests. For additional information on native wildflowers, bloom times and caterpillar-host plant relationships, look up Ohio State University Extension’s Factsheet W-12-2002.

Provide native nectar plants for monarch butterflies.
- *Achillea* (Yarrow)
- *Apocynum* (Dogbane)
- *Aquilegia* (Columbine)
- *Aronia* (Chokeberry)
- *Asclepias* (Milkweed)
- *Aster*
- *Callicarpa* (Beautyberry)
- *Cephalanthus* (Buttonbush)
- *Coreopsis* (Tickseed)
- *Echinacea* (Coneflower)
- *Erigeron* (Daisy Fleabane)
- *Eupatorium* (Joe Pye Weed)
- *Filipendula* (Meadowsweet)
- *Helenium* (Sneezeweed)
- *Helianthus* (Sunflower)
- *Hydrangea arborescens*
- *Liatris* (Blazing Star)
- *Lobelia* (Cardinal Flower)
- *Monarda* (Bee Balm)
- *Penstemon* (Bear’s Tongue)
- *Phlox*
- *Physocarpus opulifolius* (Ninebark)
- *Rhus* (Sumac)
- *Rudbeckia* (Black-eyed Susan)
- *Sambucus* (Elderberry)
- *Solidago* (Goldenrod)
- *Vaccinium* (Blueberry)
- *Veronicastrum* (Culver’s Root)
- *Vernonia* (Ironweed)
- *Viburnum*