

Weekly Column for week of 2-8-10
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Attracting Butterflies

It is still cold outside, but spring will come once again. Perhaps you would like to see more butterflies in your yard this year. Butterflies come in many colors and sizes, but they all seem to have such grace and beauty as they make their way throughout your yard. They are usually not in a rush, so you really get to enjoy their splendor as they pass by to visit flowers or rest on plants and shrubbery. We have all seen butterflies in our yards, but a few changes could attract even more.

Food, cover, and water are the main things butterflies will need to find in your yard to stay a little longer. To make sure that caterpillars and adult butterflies have enough of these resources, it is good to think beyond just wildflowers and include trees, shrubs, vines, and grasses. Your yard may already have some or most of these things already, which is helpful.

For long term butterfly activity, you should consider the butterfly in its larval stage as a caterpillar. They feed on plants such as cabbage, dill, parsley and milkweed. As caterpillars become adults, they will depend mostly on flower nectar to get the nourishment they need. Having a variety of flowers for butterflies to choose from is a great way to keep butterflies around.

Trees and shrubs can serve as perching areas for butterflies to enjoy the sun. They can also be used as cover when the weather is rainy or windy. Combining these landscape features with nectar sources such as flowers will make the butterflies feel right at home.

For more information on how to attract butterflies to your yard, you can visit the web at www.ces.purdue.edu/extmedia/FNR/FNR-248-W.pdf. Here, you will find tips and ideas for creating a butterfly friendly yard. You can also contact your Elkhart County Extension office for more information.

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