

Week of June 15

By Sage Sassafras

Butterflies and Gardens

It's high time to gear up your garden for butterflies before summer flutters by!

Creating a garden where butterflies will congregate has everything under the sun to do with color. Butterflies are attracted to color (who isn't?), so there should be a good variety of color in your selection of flowers. Think flowers that are native to our area to help ensure an intact future for butterfly generations to come. Both the flowers and the butterflies that favor this region have been surviving in a symbiotic system for years so we're well advised to leave this system alone.

A butterfly garden is very simple. Cluster lots of clusters of flowers in a constant sunny location (adult butterflies will only feed in the sun) that escapes the wind. Think red, yellow, orange, pink and purple blossoms. These might be zinnias, marigolds, sunflowers, butterfly bush, milkweeds (monarchs thrive on milkweeds), verbenas and many mint varieties. Our winged friends also need constant flowering blooms so work with plants that yield a variety of blossom and color throughout the summer.

Placing a flat-topped rock nearby gives the butterflies a comfort station to rest on in the warmth of the sun; this is a place for them and for you to rest. If you place a saucer of moistened sand nearby, they can refresh themselves by simply landing on it and extracting minerals and moisture as needed.

Of course, using pesticides and non-organic fertilizers is just plainly and simply not acceptable in attracting butterflies. Please do use only organic fertilizers and earth-friendly methods to control the unwanted insects in all your gardening practices. I'll save this for another article.

Once you have your flowers in bloom, sit back and start counting and documenting the variety of butterflies that come to feast on what you're growing.

Happy gardening and don't forget to check out the website www.woodstockgardenclub.org. Remember that Mother Nature needs all the coddling we can give her.