

## **Nectar Gardening for Butterflies, Honey Bees and Native Bees**

**By Michelle Peterson, St. Lucie County Master Gardener**

Plants produce nectar as a means of attracting insects, birds and other potential pollinators. One of the greatest benefits of gardening with nectar-producing plants is being able to provide an attractive habitat for a great number of wildlife, particularly butterflies, honey bees and native pollinators. A standard nectar garden includes a mix of annuals, perennials, herbs, shrubs and trees. Although there are many commonalities in nectar gardens, each has specific requirements when attracting a specific pollinator.

### Butterflies:

- Prefer red, orange, pink and yellow flowers
- Like trumpet-shaped flowers that hold sweet nectar
- Need species-specific host plants that provide shelter, camouflage and larval food.

### Honeybees:

- Prefer yellow, white, blue and purple flowers – can't see the color red
- Like daisy-like flowers with broad petals that offer a large landing pad
- Need pollen as well as nectar to feed the hive

### Native Bees:

- Prefer fruiting trees and shrubs and native plants
- Have short life spans, and like a variety of blossoms throughout the year
- Are largely ground-dwelling and prefer native soil that free of pesticides and fertilizers

Butterflies and bees also like shallow mud puddles where they get their source of water and minerals.

Most plants that attract pollinators require full sun (a minimum of 5 to 6 hours of light a day), so it may be more of a challenge to attract bees and butterflies to your shade garden, though not entirely impossible.

Pesticides will not only keep pesky bugs away, but also the ones that you're trying to attract. Be very judicious in your applications, and choose spot treatments over systemic.

Avoid planting the red flower passion vine (*Passiflora racemosa*) which can be poisonous to butterfly caterpillars.

Also, be cautious about toxic plants like Yellow Jessamine aka Carolina Jasmine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*) and White Ti Ti (*Cyrtilla racemiflora*) which are poisonous to bees.

<b>Botanical Name(s)</b>	<b>Common Name(s)</b>	<b>Be</b>	<b>Bu</b>	<b>Hu</b>	<b>Description &amp; Comments</b>
<i>Acer rubrum</i>	Red Maple	X			The blossoms of the Red Maple herald the beginning of nectar flow for beekeepers in Florida
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow	X	X		Herb that is a great nectar source and larval food for Painted Lady butterflies
<i>Aesculus pavia</i>	Red Buckeye; Firecracker Plant		X	X	Small native tree most popular for its springtime display of three to six-inch-long x 1.5-inch-wide, attractive red flowers; shade tolerant and resistant to pests and diseases
<i>Agapanthus africanus</i>	African Blue Lily	X	X	X	Dark green strappy leaves; spikes of purplish-blue and white heads of trumpet blossoms; bloom from mid to late summer
<i>Agastache</i>	Hyssop	X		X	Perennial herbs; brightly colored flowers and aromatic foliage
<i>Allium tuberosum</i>	Chives, Garlic Chives, Chinese Leeks	X	X		fast growing and fast spreading perennial that needs to be divided every 3-4 years; at home in vegetable, herb, container or flower garden; flower clusters on stalks smell like violets, and are great attractors; will tolerate light shade
<i>Anethum graveolens</i>	Dill	X	X		Annual herb with lacy, blue-green foliage and yellow, umbrella-like flowers; Dill (and other members of the carrot family) are the sole food plants for the caterpillars of the beautiful Black Swallowtail butterfly
<i>Asclepias spp.</i>	Milkweed; Butterfly weed	X	X		Evergreen perennial shrub, often grown as an annual; Butterflies and other nectar-sipping insects are attracted to the blossoms, and both Monarch and Queen butterflies lay their eggs on milkweed; most varieties will tolerate light shade
<i>Asimina spp.</i>	Pawpaw; Prairie Banana; Indiana Banana; Hoosier Banana	X	X		Small clustered trees with large leaves and banana-mango-flavored fruit, native to North America; the only host plant for the Zebra Swallowtail butterfly; will tolerate partial shade
<i>Aster spp.</i>	Aster	X	X		Daisy-like flowers that produce large clusters of blossoms in white, purple, lavender, pink or red; bloom mid to late summer and fall; perennial in South Florida
<i>Buddleia spp.</i>	Butterfly Bush; Summer Lilac	X	X	X	Semi-evergreen shrub that produces cone-shaped flower clusters in purple, pink, white or red; pinching off spent flowers prolong blooming period ; Perfect foundation plant for nectar garden; full to part sun
<i>Bulbine frutescens</i>	Yellow bulbine, Snake flower, Cat's tail, Burn jelly plant	X	X	X	Clump forming evergreen succulent with tall tubular stems, similar to chives that forms spikes of small yellow to orange blossoms
<i>Callistemon citrinus</i>	Red Bottlebrush	X		X	Evergreen shrub or small tree with drooping branches that produce bright red flowers that look like the bristles of a bottlebrush; highly attractive to natives

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<i>Canna</i>	Canna Lily	X		X	Not a true lily, this tropical plant has large leaves and thick stems that support brightly colored unusually shapes flowers; some varieties are more cold tolerant than others; rhizome is rich in starch and used as food for both humans and animals in many areas of the world
<i>Cassia fasciculata</i>	Partridge Pea	X	X		A member of the legume family, this native plant is considered a weed by some; showy yellow flowers that are pollinated by bumblebees, but produces nectar on its stems, which attracts butterflies and other pollinators
<i>Cocoloba uvifera</i>	Sea Grape	X	X		Sprawling South Florida native that can be kept as a shrub or a tree; produces thick, shiny round leaves with red veins, and clusters of white flowers that produce edible fruit; will tolerate part shade and salty conditions.
<i>Coriandrum sativum</i>	Coriander, Cilantro, Chinese Parsley	X	X		Parsley-like aromatic herb with lacy green foliage and white flowers; Cilantro (and other members of the carrot family) are the sole food plants for black swallowtail caterpillars; will tolerate partial sun
<i>Coreopsis spp.L.</i>	Tickseed	X	X		Many species of perennials (and at least one annual) native to North and Central America, know for bright yellow daisy-like blossoms that bloom all summer long; deadhead to encourage re-bloom
<i>Cuphea ignea</i>	Cigar Plant; Cigarette Plant; Firecracker Plant		X	X	Small tropical perennial shrub that produces long narrow tubular orange-red flowers; will tolerate light shade
<i>Cuphea hyssopifolia</i>	Mexican Heather; False Heather	X	X		Small tropical evergreen shrub with tiny purple flowers that bloom year-long; Attractive to sulpher butterflies; grows best in filtered sun
<i>Duranta erecta</i>	Golden Dewdrop; Pigeonberry		X	X	Vine-like tropical evergreen shrub with clusters of blue to purple tubular flowers that become golden berries enjoyed by birds and other wildlife (toxic to humans); tolerates light shade
<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>	Purple Coneflower	X	X		Fast growing daisy-like perennial and a great attractor that may not grow well south of zone 9; purple or white petals with a large brown center
<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	Fennel, Anise	X	X		Aromatic biennial with soft, feathery foliage and a starburst of tiny golden flowers; Fennel (and other members of the carrot family) are the sole food plants for the caterpillars of the black swallowtail butterfly; flowers of fennel and other members of the carrot family also are attractive to adult butterflies and other beneficial insects. Ladybird beetles, hoverflies, lacewings, assassin bugs, and several kinds of wasps, all of which feed on plant eating beasts like aphids, mealy bugs and mites.
<i>Forestiera segregata</i>	Florida Privet; Inkberry; Wild Olive	X	X		Florida native evergreen shrub; tiny pale yellow flowers in spring and late fall followed by dark purple berries that native birds enjoy; will tolerate part shade

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<i>Gaillardia pulchella</i>	Blanket Flower; Indian Blanket	X	X		Native annual with red and yellow daisy-like blossoms that bloom all summer long; many hybrids are also attractors; Deadhead to encourage re-bloom; likes it hot and sunny; drought tolerant
<i>Hamelia patens</i>	Firebush, Firecracker Shrub, Hummingbird Bush,		X	X	Native tropical evergreen shrub; Fast-growing and produces showy clusters of tomato red or scarlet tubular flowers
<i>Helianthus debilis</i>	Beach Sunflower	X	X		Spreading perennial that has attractive, small sunflower-like flower heads which are borne throughout the year
<i>Helianthus spp.</i>	Sunflowers	X	X		Any brightly colored sunflower, whether annual or perennial, will be a great attractor, though few of the perennials grow well in South Florida (anything warmer than zone 9).
<i>Impatiens wallerana</i>	Impatiens, Touch-Me-Nots, Jewel Weed	X	X	X	Popular cold-sensitive annual flowering plants that do well in South Florida; prolific bloomers that come in a variety of colors; create a carpet of red to attract native bees
<i>Jacquemontia pentanthos</i>	Blue Jacquemontia; Skyblue Cluster Vine	X	X		Twining climbing vine with bowl-shaped blue flowers with white eyes (resemble blue daze); endangered native vine that prefers warmer climate zones, but can become aggressive when cultivated.
<i>Justica brandegeana</i>	Shrimp Plant; False Hops	X	X	X	Clumps of twiggly stems with yellow to dark red bracts that contain white flowers; pruning helps increase blooming; prefers partial shade.
<i>Lonicera sempervirens</i>	Coral Honeysuckle, Trumpet Honeysuckle	X	X	X	Native perennial climbing vine the produces clusters of bright orange colored tubular flowers that it produces throughout spring and summer.
<i>Lantana montevidensis</i>	trailing lantana, weeping lantana	X	X		Trailing shrubby tropical perennial with clusters of pale purple flowers – continuous bloomer in warm climates. Non-native, but not as invasive as <i>L. camara</i> . <b>WARNING:</b> Unripe berries of <i>Lantana</i> species are toxic. Livestock and pets have become ill after eating the foliage.
<i>Melissa officinalis</i>	Lemon Balm	X	X		Any plants in the mint family (Lamiaceae) attract pollinators; Lemon balm produces tiny flowers from pale yellow to pale lavender all summer long; larval food for the White Peacock butterfly
<i>Melochia tomentosa</i>	Pyramid Bush, Teabush	X	X		Native shrub with modest purple blossoms; hardy and drought tolerant
<i>Mentha spp.</i>	Mints	X	X		Just about anything in the mint family is a good attractor; you can identify a mint by the square stem as well as herbaceous aroma; generally serves as larval food for Painted Lady and White Peacock butterflies.
<i>Monarda didyma</i>	Bee Balm, Bergamot, Oswego Tea	X	X	X	Mint family; good attractor, though difficult to grown south of zone 9; does best in dry conditions; will tolerate some light shade; deadheading increases bloom.
<i>Ocimum basilicum</i>	Basil, Sweet Basil	X			Annual herb with a distinct aroma and pungent sweet flavor that blooms like salvia and spreads through seeds; white, yellow, silver or purple blossoms; many varieties available

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<i>Odontonema strictum</i>	Firespike		X	X	Herbaceous perennial that produces abundant 1-inch tubular, bright red, waxy flowers on 12-inch spikes; blooms in fall and winter; tender to the cold.
<i>Origanum majorana</i>	Marjoram	X	X		Fragrant perennial herb that is a bit cold sensitive, but a great nectar source and well worth planting
<i>Passiflora caerulea</i>	Blue Passionflower; Blue Passion Vine	X	X		Beautiful blue blossoms on this vine are favorites of bees and butterflies; serves as host plant for the Zebra Longwings (state butterfly) and the orange Julia Butterfly; can become invasive in warmer zones – plant in large pots to contain roots
<i>Passiflora suberosa</i>	Corkystem Passionflower	X	X		host plant for the Zebra Longwing butterfly caterpillars; can be invasive, though not as aggressive as <i>P. incarnate</i> ; so named due to “corky” older stems
<i>Penstemon laevigatus</i>	Eastern Smooth Beardtongue			X	Rare Florida native wildflower that attracts native bees and hummingbirds
<i>Pentas lanceolata</i>	Pentas, Star Flower, Star Cluster	X	X	X	Tender perennial with clusters of five-petal star-shaped flowers in red, fuchsia, pink, purple, and white on mound of dark green leaves; blooms best in sun, but will tolerate shade.
<i>Petroselinum crispum</i>	Parsley, Italian Parsley, Hamburg Parsley		X		Perennial herb at home in a container or as a border plant; Parsley and other members of the <i>Umbelliferae</i> , are the only plants eaten by caterpillars of the Black Swallowtail and also attracts Anise Swallowtail butterflies; tolerates light shade
<i>Petunia hybrida</i>	Petunia	X		X	Annuals throughout the country; tender perennials in zones 9-11; fast-growing and repeat bloomers; plant a carpet of bright red or pink to attract hummingbirds.
<i>Psychotria nervosa</i>	Wild Coffee	X	X		Tender evergreen perennial that blooms in late spring to early summer; tiny white flowers attract bees and butterflies; native birds enjoy autumn berries; prefers partial or filtered shade and regular watering
<i>Randia aculeata</i>	White Indigo Berry		X		Tender evergreen shrub; attractive small flowers are white and star-shaped; hardier once established; will tolerate part shade
<i>Rondeletia leucophylla</i>	Panama Rose; Bush Pentas	X	X		Tropical perennial shrub with tight rounded clusters of pink, red or orange flowers
<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	Black-eyed Susan, Gloriosa Daisy, Yellow Oxeye Daisy	X	X		Large daisy-like flowers with yellow petals and dark centers; varieties may be annual or perennial;
<i>Ruellia caroliniensis</i>	Wild Petunia; Carolina Wild Petunia	X	X		Native alternative to the highly invasive Mexican Petunia; Large trumpet-shaped lavender colored blossoms from early spring to late fall; part sun to part shade
<i>Russelia equisetiformis</i>	Firecracker Plant; Coral Plant; Fountain Plant		X		Cascading shrub with hanging clusters of scarlet tubular flowers; full sun to partial shade
<i>Sabal palmetto</i>	Sabal Palm, Cabbagepalm	X			Native palm tree with creamy white flowers on a long branched inflorescence from late summer through early winter; salt and drought tolerant; hardy zones 8 - 11

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<i>Salvia spp.</i>	Salvia; Sage	X	X	X	Salvia is the largest genus of the mint family, and most are excellent attractors featuring many showy red, pink, white or blue blooms on an upright stem; they are perennial in warmer climates; most varieties will tolerate some shade
<i>Senna ligustrina</i>	Privet Cassia		X		A native shrub with short-lived yellow flowers that bloom from late summer through winter. Attracts sulphur butterflies.
<i>Serenoa repens</i>	Saw Palmetto; Saw-Tooth Palm; Scrub palmetto	X	X		Fragrant white blossoms from this hardy drought and salt tolerant Florida native attract honeybees and butterflies. May be difficult to weed around the saw tooth frond stems, requiring long sleeves and thick gloves
<i>Solidago</i>	Goldenrod (Chapman's, Wand, Pinebarren)	X	X		Natives are best: <i>S. odora var. chapmanii</i> , <i>S. strickta</i> , <i>S. fistulosa</i>
<i>Tagetes spp.</i>	Marigold	X	X		A perfect nectar-producing annual with the ability to stave off some root-damaging nematodes from other plants.
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	Dandelion	X	X		For some this is a troublesome lawn weed; for other it is a source of garden greens; it is an all-year bloomer and great nectar source for bees and butterflies.
<i>Thymus spp.</i>	Thyme, Common Thyme, Garden Thyme	X	X		A common garden herb know for its aromatic flavor; produces pale lavender to purple blossoms; place in part shade south of zone 9 or grow in containers.
<i>Tropaeolum majus</i>	Nasturtium	X	X		Flowering plant used as an ornamental as well as an edible. Both leaves and flowers can be eaten and provide a peppery taste when added to salads; leaves are large and circular and flowers are yellow to orange and shaped like a small hibiscus blossom; Serves as larval food for Cabbage White butterflies
<i>Viburnum obovatum</i>	Walter's Viburnum; Small Viburnum	X	X		Native shrub – member of the honeysuckle family - that becomes dense and showy once established. Does well in South Florida through zones 10a. Honeybees and butterflies enjoy nectar from the white spring flowers and birds and other critters eat the fall's fleshy fruit
<i>Viola odorata</i>	Sweet violets	X	X		Fragrant pretty little purple blossoms that are self-seeding, and can become invasive; best planted in containers to avoid unwanted spread; Larval host plant for Fritillaries
<i>Zamia floridana</i>	Coontie; Seminole Bread		X		Primitive Florida native shrub – a cycad – can be either male or female; serves as the sole host plant for larvae of the rare Atala butterfly ( <i>Eumaeus atala</i> ), once thought to be extinct in Florida

Be: attracts bees; Bu: attracts butterflies; Hu: attracts hummingbirds