

BUTTERFLIES



Photo by Melina McDowell

HOW TO ATTRACT BUTTERFLIES TO YOUR GARDEN

Butterflies live all over the world. Among the thousands of species, many are endangered. Turn your garden into a butterfly habitat and you will be rewarded with their lovely surprise visits. When butterflies visit your garden they fly like tiny stringless kites, and they dance for free. They have beautiful names, such as Fiery Jewel, Lacewing, Glasswing and Big Greasy!!

The ideal place for your butterfly attracting garden will be in a sunny wind protected spot. You need to provide several things for butterflies to begin to regularly visit your garden. The adults need food, such as nectar from flowers, and the females need to lay their eggs on a plant that will provide food to the caterpillars as they hatch. Many butterflies lay their eggs on trees where ants live, and the caterpillars will not survive unless the ants are present to babysit them. Green Ants are good babysitters. Male butterflies also like to puddle about in mud where they can suck up the mud and then spit it out! Scientists think they need the minerals from the soil, so if you can provide a sunny puddly spot in your garden they will love it.

Butterfly Attracting Plants

Butterfly attracting plants that grow in the Top End include:

- *Micromelum minutum*
- *Breynia cernua*
- *Terminalia* species
- *Carallia brachiata*
- *Melicope elleryana*
- *Celtis* species
- *Pongamia pinnata*