

1. Bird and Butterfly Gardens

Bird and butterfly gardens are great theme gardens for all ages. The gardens can be part of a larger habitat restoration garden or specific to encouraging birds and butterflies into the garden.

Butterfly Gardens

Butterflies add a beauty for all garden visitors as well as serve an important role as pollinators. Since children are often attracted to butterflies it would be natural to grow the plants and flowers that attract, feed and host these beautiful creatures in your school's garden.

There are two types of plants to consider when planting a butterfly garden: the host plant (plants eaten by larva/caterpillars) and the nectar plants (to provide food for the butterflies). It is important to have the host plants mixed in or nearby so the butterflies can lay their eggs.

Some examples of butterfly host plants could include milkweed, nettle, the parsley family (dill, carrots, parsnips, etc.), plantain, roses, violets, sedum, spirea, lilacs, aspen, birch, snapdragons, thistles, plums, cherries and many others.

Perennials, annuals and some weeds can serve as nectar plants for the butterflies. The perennials include yarrow, allium, asters, bee balm, black-eyed Susan, butterfly bush, columbine, Indian paintbrush, clematis, coreopsis, daisies and mums, coneflowers, cat mint, phlox, sedum, lavender, oregano and mints. Annuals include marigolds, zinnias, impatiens, cleome, cosmos, alyssum, ageratum, snapdragons, salvia and petunias.

Butterflies also need a water source.

You can use a shallow pan with a small amount of water and a flat rock where the butterflies can walk down to the water. Be sure to keep the pan stocked with water, as they will come to rely on this source. Any insecticides used in your garden, could adversely affect or kill your new butterflies.

Attracting Hummingbirds

You can't have too many flower blooms, because hummingbirds have a voracious appetite and require a great deal of nectar. The trick to attracting hummingbirds is in the color and shape of the petals.

Color is so important to hummingbirds, even a red umbrella, or orange hat will entice the hummingbird's curiosity. Their favorite colors are the brilliant shades of red, pink and orange, and purple. They prefer petals with a trumpet shape, which are the perfect size for their long skinny beaks. To provide a constant supply, choose perennial species with long and overlapping blooming seasons.

Annuals include morning glory, nasturtiums, cosmos, scarlet runner beans, and varieties of sage (salvia), and snapdragons. Perennial favorites are bee balm, trumpet vine, lupines, columbines, bearded irises, poppies, butterfly weed, and lilies. Shrubs and vines examples are butterfly bush, cotoneasters, lilacs, pea shrubs, currants, and trumpet honeysuckle.