



Tips for Weeding, Mulching, Butterflies

Top 4 Tips for Weed Management

- Relax more about weeds. Except for noxious weeds, there is no law that requires weeds to be killed or controlled. Some plants commonly considered weeds are actually very beneficial!
- Be a good neighbor. Don't ignore weeds or embrace a weedy style that is grossly out of step with the neighborhood. Conversely, don't hesitate to enlighten your neighbors about the benefits of a more relaxed weed outlook.
- Embrace weed-pulling. When trying to control weeds, think mechanical control first: hoeing, digging, mowing and pulling. Herbicide spraying should be seen as a last resort.
- Think about our trees. If herbicide spraying is deemed necessary to control lawn weeds, plan to spray in the fall. Fall spraying typically kills weeds better than in the spring and there is much less potential harm to trees and other non-target plants.

Top 4 Tips for Mulching

- For long-term soil improvement, use organic mulches like wood chips, leaves, decayed grass clippings or compost.
- Apply mulch only 2-3" deep; deep enough to reduce weeds but not limit transfer of soil and water.
- If weeds have already begun to take over, it's best to get rid of them before mulching. Large weedy areas can be covered with clear plastic for several weeks to eliminate existing weeds and seeds. Smaller patches can be hand-weeded or hoed.
- Mulches more quickly enrich the soil if they are partially decomposed or shredded, and wetting them down will further encourage decomposition.

Tips for Attracting Butterflies

Besides the sheer pleasure and beauty of turning a still garden into a suddenly moving one, there are many good reasons to plant a butterfly garden. Dennis Murphy, Director of the Center for Conservation Biology at Stanford University, argues that "Planting local native plant species in a rich, well-planned butterfly garden reduces the isolation of native plants in reserves and parks, provides essential corridors between remaining patches of habitat, and aids in repairing the patchwork of ecosystems that survive."

For many of us, though, seeing the sheer delight of a four-year-old following butterflies around a garden is reason enough to offer habitat. Thankfully, planting a butterfly garden is an act of stewardship toward the wider environment that is confirmed and compelled by our own personal enjoyment. Here's some tips for attracting butterflies to your garden:

- Full sun is the best place for butterflies since most butterflies need body temperatures of 80 degrees Fahrenheit in order to fly.
- Single flowers are more open and accessible to butterflies than the more heavily-petaled double flowers.
- Hybridized flowers tend to be selected for characteristics other than nectar supply and therefore are less likely to be good nectar producers.
- Flowers with disc centers offer an easy access "landing platform" for pollinators.
- Milkweeds are some of the best plants for butterflies. An added benefit is that common milkweed is bad-tasting, so predators quickly learn to avoid eating the larvae.
- One of the best nectar sources is something we grow without trying... the common dandelion attracts gossamer wings, vanessids and skippers. Another common weed, the thistle, is particularly popular with monarchs.
- Creating low, damp "puddling" areas attracts young males; they use their probosces to withdraw minerals from the wet soil.
- Shelter from wind and rain is essential. Thick grasses like little bluestem or switchgrass, as well as vines and shrubs, are good sources of protection.
- For many flowering plants, the removal of nectar stimulates more production of it.