

Hummingbird and Butterfly Garden Description and Care Log

Distribute 06-29-2017

Background- On June 24, a group of 20 volunteers planted a Hummingbird and Butterfly Garden at a residence near the Medical Center. The garden was a project from an internet auction organized to raise funds to support completion of an Education Resource Center for the neighborhood. Most of the volunteers were Gardening Volunteers of South Texas (GVST) but the group included Bexar County Master Gardeners, neighbors, and other individuals wanting to help and to learn about water conservation and butterfly gardening. Businesses led by Quality Organic Supply, Milberger's Nursery, Fanick's Nursery and Green Grass Inc. provided the compost, mulch, plants and other materials for the garden. This article includes excerpts from the "Description and Care Log" prepared for the garden that will assist you in planting your own Butterfly and Hummingbird Garden. If you want a copy of the full log you may obtain one by visiting one of the participating entity websites.

Plant Selection-The garden is 625 sq.ft. It includes blooming plants that will provide nectar 12 months of the year and plants required by monarchs, gulf fritillaries, giant swallowtails and other butterfly varieties that only lay their eggs on specific plants. Most of the plants are perennials but some are annuals. Plants were also selected so that there was good representation in the winter and that the garden personality would change as the seasons progress.

Soil Preparation- The native soil is rocky and compacted. Three inches of compost was applied over the whole garden. Thirty lbs. of slow release lawn fertilizer (19-5-9) was spread over the planting area as well.

Water- Three inches of double cut cedar mulch was applied to the garden to conserve moisture, reduce weeds and keep the shallow soil cool. Most of the plants in the garden are drought tolerant but to produce maximum blooms for nectar, water for 1 hour every week with leaky hoses. For effective use of the leaky hose run the water at low pressure (1/4 turn of the spigot)

Zinnia Flower Garden- Forty sq. ft. of the garden was prepared for zinnias because of their colorful display, popularity as a nectar source, and inclination to reseed. The area was tilled to mix the compost and native soil. For immediate color Dreamland transplants were planted on one ft. squares. California Giant zinnias were seeded in the bed along with the transplants.

In the winter the zinnias will have to be replaced with winter blooming annuals such as calendulas and stocks. They are attractive and provide nectar for the winter butterflies.

Other Nectar Producing Plants- One of the most interesting plants in the garden is the dwarf porter weed. It bears short pieces of bright red bloom on weeping stalks from a mound that grows to about 2.5 feet tall. The nectar is a favorite of butterflies and hummingbirds because of its reported nutritional potency. The porter weed will have to be replanted each spring. Mexican flame vine was planted as a late summer/fall nectar source. Larger trellises can be provided for this and other vines in the garden to expand their growing area.

Milkweeds- Two types of milkweed were planted in the garden. Milkweeds are required for monarchs to lay their eggs. The monarchs will lay eggs on the milkweeds in April on their way from the Mexican wintering grounds to central North America. During the summer, queen butterflies lay eggs on the milkweed. In addition to being the required egg-laying site for monarchs and queen butterflies, milkweed is a popular nectar source. The tropical milkweed has an orange and yellow bloom. It grows to 4 feet tall. The native, *Asclepias tuberosa*, milkweed only grows about 10 inches tall. It produces an orange or yellow bloom. *A. tuberosa* dies back in the winter but the roots are hardy.

Gregg's Mistflower- Mistflower rates very high on everyone's nectar producing plant list. The sprawly 2 feet tall plants will be covered with swallowtails, monarchs, painted ladies, bordered patch, queens and other butterfly species until cold weather arrives in November. The plant dies back for the winter and resprouts in late spring.

Duranta- This large weeping plant becomes covered with purple crinkly blooms from mid-summer until late fall. In the autumn you can expect it to also be covered with monarchs, queens, and gulf fritillaries. The woody stems are killed by the cold temperatures most winters so it does require some pruning in the spring just as the poinciana, firebush, lantana, blue salvias, rock rose, mint marigold and esperanza in the garden. Mexican flame vine is another fall blooming nectar source

Egg-laying Plants – In addition to milkweeds for monarchs, passion vine was planted for gulf fritillaries. Two citrus trees will provide egg-laying sites for giant swallowtails and cannas are for Brazilian skippers. Flame acanthus are the favorite egg-laying site for janais patch; and shrimp plant was planted for Texan crescentpot. Dwarf ruellia attracts buckeye butterflies.

Other Plants- The landscape that hosts the Butterfly and Hummingbird Garden and the surrounding neighborhood is well planted with ornamentals, wildflowers, and shade trees, many of which are attractive to the hummingbirds and butterflies. They complement the plants in the garden.