

Interest in home butterfly gardens is increasing

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There's still plenty of time to plant some butterfly weed in your home garden and enjoy colorful monarch butterflies as they visit this summer.

The momentum of creating home butterfly gardens is increasing. The interesting thing about these gardens is the fact home gardeners are wanting to grow plants to be eaten by caterpillars.

Wow, what a change. I usually get questions about how to get rid of caterpillars eating the garden plants. But to get the beautiful butterflies, the caterpillars need something to forage on.

Planting a butterfly gar-

den involves knowing what kind of caterpillar/butterfly you're trying to attract. Most of them have a preferred food source. For example, Giant Swallowtails prefer citrus, and I love watching the dance these butterflies perform while laying eggs. Their caterpillars are the ugly Orange Dog, or more colorfully named "bird crap" caterpillars.

But, for this column, I want to concentrate on what could be called America's butterfly: the monarch. Their caterpillars exclusively eat the foliage from *Asclepias* species, which we call butterfly weed. It's a unique arrangement, as toxins produced by these

plants are safe for the caterpillars, but poisonous for their predators.

Butterfly weed is low maintenance, attracts lots of monarchs and other butterflies, and is deer resistant. They are great choices for home landscapes.

These plants are also called milkweed for their milky-white latex sap. There are several species native to Mississippi, but perhaps the most well-known species is *Asclepias tuberosa*. This native perennial plant, chosen as a Mississippi Medallion winner in 2012, grows well across the state.

Clusters of tubular flowers, which become prominent in late summer and early fall, are various shades of

orange, but some will have flowers shaded towards yellow or red. They're easy to grow from seed in a container and can be transplanted when large enough.

Asclepias curassavica is a nonnative tropical milkweed that blooms from spring through the fall. Many garden centers carry this plant, which will provide early-season forage for caterpillars.

The problem I've observed with tropical milkweed is it is also a magnet for aphids. While they are unsightly, aphids don't seem to impact growth and flowering. I don't want to use pesticides to remedy the problem, but blasting the plant every couple of days with the garden hose does knock off many of the pests.

Don't rely entirely on this species. There is concern about overwintering tropical milkweed being a host to protozoan parasites that can harm butterflies. A couple of these fast-growing plants would be a good source of forage until our native species start producing more foliage.

A fun forage plant that the monarch caterpillars love is *Gomphocarpus physocarpus*, commonly called balloon plant or hairy balls. This plant produces 2- to 3-inch, lime-green seed pods.

If you're interested in starting your own butterfly garden, watch the Southern Gardening TV segment, Butterfly Gardening from Scratch (<http://extension.msstate.edu/southern-gardening/video/2019/butterfly-gardening-scratch>).

If you have a butterfly gar-

den, you can join a unique project. The Rosalyn Carter Butterfly Trail starts in Plains, Georgia, and there are registered butterfly gardens across the United

States. In fact, my home garden is a registered stop on the trail. For more information, visit <http://www.rosalynncarterbutterflytrail.org/home>.



Monarch caterpillars eat the foliage of only *Asclepias* species, or butterfly weed. (Photo by MSU Extension Service/Gary Bachman)

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DURANT NEWS
by Rowena Hill

Mrs. Scot Binegar recently spent time visiting her dad.

The Women's Missionary Union of First Baptist Church enjoyed guest speaker Tamara Walbert, Baptist Student Union director at Holmes Community College in Goodman, Tuesday night.

Sympathy is extended to all who have recently lost loved ones. Love and prayers to the families of each.

The Aldy sisters, Bess, Shirley and this writer enjoyed a two day visit from Aunt Mrs. James (Sara) Pilgrim of Vicksburg and Cousin Mrs. Janette Cain Thursday and Friday nights. We really enjoyed being together again. I don't know Janette's husband's last name but he is a great guy.

Mrs. Stacey Jones and children of Yazoo City visited Mr. and Mrs. Ed Hathcock during the weekend.

Mrs. Gale Sheppard (don't know her married name) of Pearl was an overnight guest of Joey and Jackie Hill Friday. I regret I

didn't get to spend any time with her. She is loved by lots of Durant residents.

There has been several deaths lately in the area. Sympathy and love to each family. You are in our prayers. May God bless each of you.

Mr. Eddy Johnson recently visited his brother David and family in Alabama. We hardly see David anymore but would like to.

Love and prayers to all sick residents and former residents of our community. Those I'm aware of are: Joe and Mary Evelyn Crowder, Buck and Nell Burrell and Mrs. Katherine Cagle. We miss seeing and being together and pray for complete healing.

The Community Easter Cantata will be at Main Street Baptist Church April 17 in Goodman at 6:30. Fellowship will follow. Bring your favorite dish. Mrs. Stephanie Diffey is the leader of the Combined Choir. All are welcome.

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HELP WANTED: Temporary Work – 2 Job Opening – Starting: 06/01/2019 and ending: 11/01/2019
We plow, plant and harvest corn and peanuts. We need seasonal employees to operate farm tractors, combines and other farm equipment to assist with plowing, planting and harvesting. Employees will need to drive semi-tractor trailers to haul the commodity from our fields to the farm, storage bins and/or mills. Employees will need to do routine maintenance and repairs to equipment/truck. Must have a class A CDL or equivalent or be able to obtain within 30 days of hire. Employer will conduct post-hire drug tests at employer's expense since we operate a drug-free workplace. Require 3 months experience.

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