

# ABODE

## INTO THE OUTSIDE

# Butterflies and Fishes

AWAKEN THE GARDEN WITH FLITTERING BUTTERFLIES AND GLITTERING KOI

By Nanci Theoret

Gardening—discovered or rediscovered by droves during lockdown—remains popular because of its nourishing nature as low-impact physical exercise, as an outdoor retreat, and for the production of flowers or food. Modern-day green thumbs also feel rewarded by providing a nourishing habitat for birds, bees, and butterflies, too.

From simple plantings around the lanai to ponds that take the aquarium outside, butterfly gardens and koi ponds elevate the serenity of your scenery. A lot of space isn't necessarily required, says Herb Techmer, owner of Naples Garden Landscaping in Bonita Springs. He creates butterfly-attracting micro-gardens within existing landscaping and koi ponds, ranging from the simple to the elaborate.



### GARDENING FOR WILDLIFE

Gardens that attract birds, bees, butterflies, and other wildlife create a healthy, sustainable landscape year-round.

"The cool thing about Southwest Florida is that we get butterflies in the winter," says Techmer. "Butterflies are attracted to big, vibrant beautiful flowers for nectar and food, such as lantanas, pentas, and black-eyed Susans."



BUTTERFLY-ATTRACTING PLANTS SUCH AS LANTANA (LEFT) AND BLACK-EYED SUSANS (TOP) ARE EASILY INCORPORATED INTO EXISTING LANDSCAPING. CENTER: A 15-FOOT JAPANESE BRIDGE SPANS AN OUTDOOR KOI POND CREATED BY NAPLES GARDEN LANDSCAPING.

Host plants such as red milkweed become the staging ground, providing habitat—and a nursery—for the entire lifecycle of a butterfly. "Larvae and caterpillars will chew host plants down to the ground," he says. "The plants have adapted to that during their evolution. This produces better growth and abundant flowers."

Techmer offers photos and insight into the plants best-suited for butterflies on his website ([naplesgardenlandscaping.com](http://naplesgardenlandscaping.com)). The National Wildlife Federation ([gardenforwildlife.org](http://gardenforwildlife.org)) outlines the best native plants by state, including "monarch munchables" and "hummingbird heroes" for Florida.

It's a good idea to provide butterflies with

a source of clean fresh water that is replenished three times a week, Techmer recommends. Bird baths aren't a good option because the sitting water can stagnate. Fountains can work if there's a quiet area away from areas of circulation. "They need a landing spot," he says. "Putting out fruit like cut-up oranges, apples, and grapes for butterflies to feed on is a huge draw."

Once set up, a butterfly garden can produce almost immediate results. Pesticides are detrimental to fragile creatures, so they negate creating a healthy habitat. "You have to have a designated area or a buffer," says Techmer. "You can't spray near a butterfly garden."