

Butterfly Bush

The butterfly bush, *Buddleia davidii*, is just the right plant for attracting butterflies. This plant does more than just attract butterflies; it is a magnet to all butterflies attracted to nectar. The butterfly bush lasts from mid summer to early October; you may even be able to get a second flowering out of some species.

History

All of the butterfly bushes originated in Chile. The name *Buddleia* comes from an amateur botanist named Rev. Adam Buddle, who had the first butterfly bush in Europe, a cultivar called *Buddleia globosa*, which arrived in England in 1774. In 1896, seeds of the first *Buddleia davidii* arrived in London, and this cultivar was named after a French missionary, Pere Armand David B.

Cultivation

The buddleia is easy to grow or, as some say, hard to kill. The plant tolerates urban pollution and alkaline soil; it does best in a sunny spot with well-drained soil. Until this plant has gone through a period of drought or high stress, you will not see any spider mites. For best growth of this plant, use a light application of fertilizer, and in the summer do some deep root watering.

End of Season

Some species of butterfly bush bloom on the previous year's growth, making the

instructions for pruning a little different for each cultivar. Nectar is provided for spring and early-summer butterflies, so these plants should not be pruned until after blossoming. In mild climates, it is best to cut the plant back right after blooming as this encourages a second bloom in fall. After second bloom, cut these bushes back to remove old woody stalks and to help the plant maintain its shape.

Other varieties of buddleia bloom on new growth. Cutting spent blossoms will force repeat blooms and a continuous nectar supply. In cold climates, it is best to mulch in the fall. In the late winter, cut the plants back to a foot high before new growth appears. In the summer you will have larger flowers and a fuller shape.

Characteristics

The size of the buddleia ranges anywhere from 6-12 feet tall, depending on the cultivar. Its flowers are from a foot to two long, and the colour varies from deep purple to white. Each flower also has its own unique shape.

The list of butterflies this plant attracts is rather long: anise swallowtail, western tiger swallowtail, pale swallowtail, pipevine swallowtail, monarch, painted lady and cloudless giant sulphur, to name just a few.

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