



How to Attract Birds & Butterflies using Garden Planters

Attracting birds and butterflies to your outdoor living space is not difficult to do if you welcome them with a long-term source of food, [water](#), and a place of safety. It means planting the kinds of flowers, [shrubs](#), vines, and trees that provide berries, seeds, and nectar, a nesting area that is protected from predators, and fresh water for drinking and bathing. And, yes, you can do all that in a small space with container gardens, and even if you are a city dweller, birds and butterflies will accept your yard, [patio](#), deck, or balcony as a wildlife oasis and pay regular visits.

How do You Create the Best Environment for Attracting Birds and Butterflies?

1. Supply Food:

- Grow sun-loving flowers (i.e., particularly those that grow wild in meadows) in your [patio garden planters](#) to attract songbirds, hummingbirds, and butterflies. Choose brightly colored flowers like the purple coneflower (echinacea pupruea), which produces enough seeds to feed birds well into the winter.
- Butterflies, hummingbirds, and orioles love flowers with abundant sweet nectar (e.g., the bleeding heart, or dicentra eximia; honeysuckle vines, or lonicera, both perennials). Be sure and provide a [trellis](#), twine, or wire against a wall so that your vines can climb and cling.
- Annuals provide blooms all summer long, but it's nice to have a variety of perennials, too, that burst into flower at staggered intervals offering seeds and nectar from spring to fall. Select plants that grow well in your area.
- Supplement the food provided by your container gardens with a birdfeeder and a supply of commercial seed mix to attract a variety of birds, or (my two personal favorites) a hummingbird feeder with sweetened colored water, and a goldfinch feeder with niger thistle seeds. These last two feeders are great because the squirrels can't get into them.
- Insects attract birds, too, and our feathered friends will be eating every pest in sight, including mosquitoes. You don't have to do anything to attract a particular insect, of course, and every yard has plenty.

- Organic gardening attracts more wildlife, too - all of it: birds, butterflies, and insects. They know what's good for them, and it's good for you, too.

2. Fresh Water is Needed:

- You can buy a birdbath, a fountain, or construct your own [water garden](#) with an appropriate garden [planter](#).
- Buy a waterproof container (e.g., consider plastic planters or ceramic planters) or use a waterproof liner. Make sure the drainage hole is plugged. This water feature will differ from most water gardens and fountains because you are going to make sure the container is shallow and the water is no more than two or three inches deep - that's what birds prefer.
- Vegetation planted around running or dripping water is great for attracting birds and butterflies (butterflies like to take a drink, too). You can buy a little fountain or a drip arrangement to fit into your container.
- Make sure the bath is placed high enough to be secure, which means too high for a cat to reach it. Deck rail planters are a good choice and so are any others that sit at, or can be attached at, a safe height.
- See that there is a perch, or a level rim, or rocks placed in the container so that your birds can walk into the water to safely bathe or sit and dip their beaks into it.

3. Provide a Home:

- Attracting birds year round means providing safe hiding places for homes and so you need planters that will support flowering shrubs, an evergreen or two, or even a small fruit-bearing tree where birds can feed and nest. Planters have to be heavy enough that a fully-grown shrub or tree won't cause the planter to topple over (e.g., cast cement; wrought iron).
- If planting trees or shrubs with tangled growth for nesting isn't feasible, you can always buy birdhouses.

Check locally to see what birds to expect so that you don't buy a house for a bluebird when there aren't any in the area. Creating an environment for attracting birds and butterflies takes a little planning, but container gardening makes it easy.