

# PLUGGED IN

FUN FOR KIDS

A COOPERATIVE PROJECT OF THE SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS AND THE EDUCATORS' ROUNDTABLE, PUBLISHED MONTHLY TO PROMOTE LEARNING AMONG YOUNG READERS IN NATURAL SCIENCE, HISTORY, TECHNOLOGY, AND ART

## This Month's Theme: How to Attract Wildlife to Your Garden

Your garden may be near your house, beside your apartment, at your school, or it may even be in a barrel or a window box. It is fun to attract wildlife to your garden because then you can watch the animals closely and learn about them. If you don't have a garden of your own, you can always see lots of wildlife if you visit the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden.

What kinds of wildlife might visit your garden? Birds, butterflies, and moths are always exciting visitors. Some animals can cause trouble in a garden, and so you probably don't want to attract creatures like deer, gophers, moles, ground squirrels, or skunks. You may even need to figure out how to keep these mammals out of your garden.

### Butterflies and Moths

Butterflies and moths undergo metamorphosis so they have complicated life cycles. Larvae or caterpillars generally munch on leaves, while adult butterflies and moths often feed on nectar. The winged adult forms of some species live for only a short time and do not feed at all.

If you plant certain types of plants in your garden, you will be able to attract many types of butterflies and moths. Beautiful big Ceanothus Silk Moths lay their eggs on Ceanothus bushes and their big green caterpillars eat the leaves of these



Colorful zinnias attract butterflies.



A hungry ceanothus moth caterpillar



Ceanothus silk moth

plants. Monarch Butterflies lay their eggs on milkweed plants, and their caterpillars often eat all of their leaves in a few days.

There are many websites

from which you can learn what types of plants best attract butterflies and moths. Here is the website of a native plant nursery that has a lot of good information:

<http://aspilatas.com/butterfl.htm>

Native plants are especially attractive to native insects. Some non-native plants are also very attractive. Good plants to include in a beautiful butterfly garden are zinnias of many colors, yarrow, lavender, verbena, and milkweed.



A Checkerspot butterfly on purple sage



The bright yellow California dogface is California's State Butterfly.



Coconut bird feeder

out the coconut juice and save it for drinking. Ask the grown-up to saw the side off the shell so that there is a cave-like place for birds to stand. Remove the delicious white nut meat from the inside. You can eat it in chunks or you can grate it to use when you bake cakes or cookies. Now hang the feeder in a tree and pour bird seed in it. Some people put melted lard or bacon fat mixed with seeds in their coconut bird feeders.

**Flowers are hummingbird feeders:** Hummingbirds feed on nectar from flowers and so the best kind of feeders you can provide for them are suitable types of flowers. Hummingbirds

like long tubular flowers with lots of nectar. They are attracted especially to red and magenta flowers like those of our native Hummingbird Sage and California Fuchsia. Now sit still, be very quiet, and watch for birds! If you have binoculars be sure to use them.



A hummingbird feeds from hummingbird sage.

They are attracted especially to red and magenta flowers like those of our native Hummingbird Sage and California Fuchsia.

### Frogs and Toads

Hop to it! Frogs and toads are fun to watch, and they will eat insects that could harm your garden. Follow the directions below to create a habitat for toads in your backyard.

You will need:

- One clay flowerpot
- Permanent markers or paint
- One small rock

1. Use the markers or paint to decorate the outside of your flowerpot. Give the paint plenty of time to dry!
2. Find a spot near your house where the ground is wet and there is plenty of shade. The best spots are patches of dirt that get lots of water and are shaded by a plant or building.
3. Find some fallen leaves or grass clippings. Create a bed of leaves in the spot you've chosen for your toad abode (house). The toad will hide under these leaves to stay cool.



A big toad



Chorus frogs eat flies.



A toad abode is easy to make.

4. Set your flowerpot upside down on your chosen spot. Use a small rock to prop up one edge so that a toad can crawl in.
5. Wait. Try to leave your toad abode alone. If you check on it, you may scare away any toads that might want to move in!
6. Listen. The best way to know if you have a toad is to go outside right after the sun goes down and listen. Do you hear croaking?

Now you can enjoy your time in your garden with fewer insect pests.

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