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Phipps opens its Butterfly Forest

By The Tribune-Review
Saturday, April 26, 2008



Buzz up!

BUTTERFLY FOREST

Butterflies are free, says the title of a well-known play and movie.

But starting today, a good number of them will be spending time in the Stove Room of Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens in Oakland.

The staff at Phipps will open its Butterfly Forest at 9:30 a.m., providing a look at the emergence of butterflies and giving them a tropical setting in which to begin their lives.

story continues below



Chrysalises are brought in to "hatch cases" in the humid Stove Room. They come out of their cocoons, flap their wings the first time and begin their in-flight lives.

A new group of butterflies is brought into the room each week, so the roll call in the room changes constantly.

"It is impossible to tell how many are there at any one time," says Jessica Romano of Phipps. "That's just up to nature."

Late morning on a sunny day is the best time to view the butterflies because the room gets warm and bright, a good time to flutter. Earlier in the morning is not so good, because horticulture crews are

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watering the plants and butterflies don't like that moisture.

Visitors need to be careful when making their tours. Butterflies sometimes settle on the walkways and could easily be crushed.

They can be rather friendly in their flapping about, though.

"They will land on your shoulders or on your backpack," Romano says.

The Butterfly Forest in the Stove Room is open through Oct. 11. Details: 412-622-6914 or [online](#).

BITS OF BUTTERFLY FACTS

- There are more than 165,000 species of butterflies.
- Butterflies and moths make up around one in six named species of insect.
- Butterflies can be found in every region of the world, in habitats as diverse as tropical rainforests and Arctic tundra.
- The butterfly order is named Lepidoptera, from the Greek words for "scale" and "wing," after the tiny scales that decorate their wings with a lavish array of colors.
- Most of the charm of butterflies is due to their scaly wings -- the tiny overlapping scales cover their wings like sequins. Although each scale almost always is only one color, when arranged in a mosaic, they dazzle the eyes with kaleidoscopic patterns and hues.
- A butterfly's head is dominated by its main sense organs -- a pair of bulbous compound eyes and a pair of antennae. The eyes are made of as many as 17,000 hexagonal facets, each one a working eye in miniature.
- Butterfly eyes are highly sensitive to color and movement but have poor definition. They probably can't make out the detailed patterns on each other's wings.
- The antennae are the main organs of smell, although they can also sense air vibrations produced by nearby noise or movement.
- Antennae play a key role in courtship -- male moths usually find their mates by scent, while certain male butterflies court females by sprinkling scented scale particles -- "love dust" -- over their partners' antennae.
- The majority of butterflies and moths have a purely liquid diet, favoring sugary fluids such as nectar or juices from rotting fruit. They feed with a coiled tongue called a proboscis, which works like a drinking straw. The proboscis is not simply a hollow tube. It consists of two tubes zipped tightly together by microscopic hooks, and fluids are sucked up through the space in between.

Source: "Butterfly" by Thomas Marent (DK Publishing, \$30)

BUTTERFLY GARDENS

Nancy Knauss has good news for home gardeners who want to entice butterflies into their yards:

"It's very easy, because the plants do all the work for you," says Knauss, the coordinator of adult education at Phipps Conservatory and a horticulturist who includes butterfly-attracting plants in her own garden.

Butterflies are drawn to plants with brightly colored flowers, and many of the perennials that Knauss recommends are long-flowering and tall enough to form an attractive backdrop for other plants. As they alight

on blossoms and drink their nectar, butterflies add motion as well as additional color to the garden.

"To me, it is like a complete picture," says Knauss.

She recommends these butterfly nectar plants for area gardens:

Bee Balm (*Monarda didyma*) 'Jacob Cline': It's a mildew-resistant selection with brilliant red flowers.

Blazing Star (*Liatris spicata*): This drought-tolerant native produces upright spikes of purple or white flowers.

Butterfly Bush (*Buddleia davidii*): Gardeners value this butterfly magnet for its reliable summer flowering and easy care. Flower color ranges from dark purple to pink, white and even yellow.

Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*): Monarch butterflies are especially drawn to this drought-tolerant native with bright orange flowers that attracts many varieties of butterflies.

Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*): This woody shrub prefers wet areas in a more naturalized site. Creamy white sphere-shaped flowers are produced in late summer.

Coneflowers (*Echinacea*): The vibrant-colored flowers in bright pink, coral, yellow, and magenta purple have a long season of bloom. Coneflowers are drought-tolerant and thrive in full sun.

Threadleaf Ironweed (*Vernonia lettermanii*): This is a new dwarf form of ironweed with narrow-leaved foliage. Bright purple flowers top the 2- to 3-foot-tall plant in fall.

Dwarf Joe Pye Weed (*Eupatorium dubium*): "Little Joe," a dwarf form of Joe Pye Weed, produces pinkish-mauve flowers in August and September on stalks that reach 4 feet in height.

Border Phlox (*Phlox paniculata*): 'David' produces pure white fragrant flowers in early summer on this mildew-resistant variety of phlox.

HOW TO ADD PERENNIALS

At 2:30 p.m. today, Phipps Conservatory will offer a program on how to add perennials that attract butterflies as well as hummingbirds and other pollinators to your garden. The talk is free with admission of \$10; \$9 for students and age 62 or older; \$7 for ages 2 to 18. Details: 412-622-6914 or [online](#).

WORD ORIGIN

butterfly: Old English, *botterfleoge*; Middle English, *boterflye*; word was in existence before the year 1000. Explanations vary, but the most consistent is the butterfly's attraction to butter and milk, which is confirmed by the German word for butterfly, *milchdieb*, or milk thief.

SPORTS EFFECTS

• **Swimming:** The butterfly is one of four main strokes in swimming. Here are the steps. First, hold your legs together and extend your arms above your head. Then kick your legs up and down once in a whipping motion generating from the hips and bending at the knees, as though you were a dolphin. Pull both of your arms simultaneously and symmetrically through the water beneath your body along with the big kick, helping to propel your body forward and out of the water. Lift your head up and breathe as you quickly pull both arms out of the water and swing them forward. Head and arms re-enter the water together in a diving motion.

• **Hockey:** The butterfly save in ice hockey is a goalie position pioneered by Glenn Hall in the 1960s and '70s, and is one of the most common techniques in the sport. To go into the butterfly, start at the basic stance, drop down to your knees with your feet spread apart, place your gloves about 12 inches above your leg pads, keep your chest up and out to help keep your balance, and put your stick on the ground between your legs. It is considered best for defending against low or medium-high shots, low screen shots, possible deflections and dekes. Great flexibility and training are required to master the technique, as the knee bend required is not a natural position for the leg, and therefore serious injury can occur when learning.

MUSIC

"Butterfly," versions by Mariah Carey, Tori Amos, Eddy Arnold, the Bee Gees, Herbie Hancock, Lenny Kravitz, Lisa Loeb

"Butterfly Kisses," Jeff Carson, won the 1997 Grammy for Best Country Song

"Dog & Butterfly," Heart

"She's a Butterfly" Martina McBride

"Bullet with Butterfly Wings," Smashing Pumpkins

"Madame Butterfly," the classic opera by Giacomo Puccini

MOVIES

Butterfly McQueen, best known for her role as Prissy in "Gone With the Wind"

"**Papillon**," with Dustin Hoffman and Steve McQueen

"**Purple Butterfly**," an epic of doomed passion and mistaken identity, features Chinese superstar Zhang Ziyi

"**The Butterfly Effect**," a sci-fi drama starring Ashton Kutcher

"**Diving Bell and the Butterfly**," a French film about a man left incapable of movement -- except for winking -- that was nominated for three Academy Awards.

"**Cocoon**," a story of seniors who get a second chance at youthful vigor

"**Silence of the Lambs**," a thriller in which a serial killer places a cocoon in each of his victim's throats

"**M. Butterfly**," a love story of sorts in which a French diplomat falls in love with a Chinese opera singer who is not all she appears to be

BUTTERFLY SYMBOLISM

The symbolism of butterflies is found in cultures around the world and dates to ancient Egypt, exemplifying metamorphosis. Yet the transformation from caterpillar to butterfly has had different meaning and prominence in different cultures.

Although the ancient Greeks connected butterflies with the soul, even linguistically, Aristotle used the acorn becoming an oak tree as an example of potential being fulfilled. The butterfly plays essentially no role in the metaphor-rich Bible or Jewish and Christian liturgies. Still, the butterfly is said to have been a popular image of transformation among early Christians, and butterfly images are found in Western culture, particularly in paintings and music.

In the Orient, butterflies are a frequent symbol for the soul. The appearance of a single butterfly might be a sign of true love approaching, but a large number of butterflies might be a bad omen.

The "Butterfly Lovers" is a popular Chinese story about a Romeo and Juliet-like couple, who emerge from the tomb after death as a pair of butterflies. It even has been turned into a programmatic one-movement violin concerto by Chinese composer Chen Gang and recorded by Gil Shaham with the Singapore Symphony.

Butterflies were a symbol of rebirth and happiness for many tribes of Native Americans.

QUOTES

"Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee." -- Muhammad Ali

"Happiness is like a butterfly which, when pursued, is always beyond our grasp, but, if you will sit down quietly, may alight upon you." -- Nathaniel Hawthorne

Author unknown: "Love is like a butterfly: it goes where it pleases and pleases wherever it goes. Love it like a butterfly: hold it too tight, it'll crush. Hold it too loose, it'll fly."

Drew Barrymore: "Everyone is like a butterfly. They start out ugly and awkward, and then morph into beautiful, graceful butterflies that everyone loves."

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