

# BUTTERFLY GARDENER

Volume 17, Issue 2  
Summer 2012

## The Great Butterfly Bush Debate





## For the Love of Butterflies

Please photocopy this membership application form and pass it along to friends and acquaintances who might be interested in NABA.

Yes! I want to join NABA and receive *American Butterflies* and *Butterfly Gardener* and/or contribute to the creation of the premier butterfly garden in the world, NABA's National Butterfly Center. The Center, located on approximately 100 acres of land fronting the Rio Grande in Mission, Texas, uses native trees, shrubs and wildflowers to create a spectacular natural butterfly garden that significantly benefits butterflies, an endangered ecosystem, and the people of the Rio Grande Valley.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Interests (circle): Listing, Gardening, Observation, Photography, Conservation,  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Dues enclosed (circle): Regular \$30 (\$60 outside U.S., Canada or Mexico), Family \$40 (\$80 outside North America). Special sponsorship levels: Copper \$50; Skipper \$100; Admiral \$250; Monarch \$1000. Institution/Library subscription to all annual publications \$50 (\$80 outside U.S., Canada or Mexico). Special tax-deductible contributions to NABA (please circle): \$125, \$200, \$1000, \$5000. Mail checks (in U.S. dollars) to: NABA, 4 Delaware Rd., Morristown, NJ 07960.

### Article Submissions

Articles, gardening tips and observations, artwork, digital high resolution photographs, poetry and comments will be considered for publication. Contact Jane Hurwitz, Editor, hurwitz@naba.org

### Advertising

*Butterfly Gardener* welcomes advertising. Please contact us for current rates and closing dates at naba@naba.org, or telephone 973.285.0907, or fax 973.285.0936

### Membership Services

If you have questions about duplicate magazines, missing magazines, membership expiration date, change of address, etc., please write to NABA Membership Services, 4 Delaware Rd., Morristown, NJ 07960. Occasionally, members send membership dues twice. Our policy in such cases, unless instructed differently, is to extend membership for an additional year. NABA sometimes exchanges or sells its membership list to like-minded organizations that supply services or products that might be of interest to members. If you would like your name deleted from membership lists we supply to others, please write and inform us at: NABA Membership Services, 4 Delaware Rd., Morristown, NJ 07960.



## Native Butterfly Bushes

Text by  
Charlotte Adelman

Photos by Stan Sheb

### Woolly Butterflybush

Texans who love silvery, variegated looking foliage need look no farther than their native perennial Woolly Butterflybush (*Buddleja marrubiifolia*), a member of the *Buddlejaceae* or Butterfly Bush Family.

This "gorgeous"<sup>1</sup> woolly ornamental shrub generally gets three feet tall (or more) and about as wide. It produces small but profuse and conspicuous long lasting and repeatedly blooming, orange-yellow or orange-red balls of aromatic lantana-like flowers from June to October. The shrub performs best when planted in full sun, after a rain, and if it is regularly (but not over) watered.

The Woolly Butterflybush's preference for dry, well-drained soils (xeric, sandy, loamy, limestone) mimics its native habitat: the limestone arroyos and canyons of the Texas and Mexican Chihuahuan Desert where the shrub developed its fuzzy, pale, white rimmed leaves as a strategy to retain scarce moisture. Not cold tolerant, it needs special care only when it is planted outside its native range, which is Southern Trans-Pecos and Mexico.

A bonus is the hummingbirds that Woolly Butterflybush attracts. Pollinators include bees and butterflies such as the Giant Swallowtail, Gulf Fritillary, Pipevine Swallowtail, and Tiger Swallowtail,<sup>2</sup> and beneficial flies. Drought-tolerant and virtually problem free, this striking garden-worthy shrub is the best known native North American butterfly bush. Available commercially, it has been included in, and is a good choice for many Texas planned landscapes.

"Contrast its softness with a crisp-edged succulent," silhouette it "against either adobe or limestone," and accentuate the orange in its flowers with "chuparosa, ocotillo, globe mallow and California poppy,"<sup>3</sup> suggests landscape designer Sally Wasowski. Woolly Butterflybush can be seen growing at the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, TX, where it is often available at its plant sales. "It's a great garden plant," says Andrea De-Long-Amaya, the Center's Director of Horticulture.

### Rio Grande Butterflybush

The less well known Rio Grande Butterflybush (*Buddleja sessiliflora*) is a large beautiful native three to six foot tall shrub that develops conspicuous yellow or green flowers from April through July and does best in moist sandy soil and light shade. It is native to Arizona and Texas stream and river banks. It is rarely encountered in the wild. This butterfly bush attracts butterflies like the Great Purple Hairstreak, and numerous bees and flies number among its pollinators, reports Martin Hagne. The Executive Director of Valley Nature Center in Weslaco, TX, he grows this butterfly bush, which is native to his southernmost Texas area, in his 6-acre nature park, some near a small artificial pond.

"I think they could be a nice addition in butterfly gardens if available," Mr. Hagne advised in an

email. "They do look nice, and grow well here in the heat." The flowers' only drawback seems to be their scent, described by some as "wet dog's ear."

## Utah, Wand, and Escobilla Butterflybushes

Potentially garden-worthy native butterfly bush species include Utah Butterflybush (aka Panamint Butterflybush, or Summer Lilac) (*Buddleja utahensis*), which is native to parts of western North America, notably California. Like many of its relatives, this shrub features gray foliage and yellow flowers. The Texas or Wand Butterflybush (*Buddleja racemosa*) was first named and described in 1859 by John Torrey, and is native to parts of Texas. The Escobilla Butterflybush (*Buddleja scordioides*), native to parts of Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and Mexico, has been the subject of scientific studies to determine if useful chemicals can be extracted from the plant.

If respectfully protected, and more widely incorporated into its home regions in our gardens and landscapes, the native butterfly bush species promise to provide ornamental beauty and nectar for many of our nation's important pollinators and also provide scientific benefits.

Charlotte Adelman is a co-author of *The Midwestern Native Garden - Native Alternatives to Nonnative Flowers and Plants, An Illustrated Guide* (Ohio University Press, 2011). Retired Chicago lawyers, Charlotte and her co-author and husband, Bernie, turned their suburban backyard into a prairie/savanna garden. The beauty of the native flowers and grasses and the wealth of birds, bees and butterflies they attracted inspired two books, *Prairie Directory of North America - US and Canada* (Lawndale Enterprises, 2001), and their latest, *The Midwestern Native Garden*.

- 1 Noreen Damude and Kelly Conrad Bender, *Texas Wildscapes – Gardening for Wildlife* (Texas Parks & Wildlife, 1999), 240, 241.
- 2 Ibid, 98,99.
- 3 Sally Wasowski with Andy Wasowski, *Native Landscaping from El Paso to L.A.* (Contemporary Books, 1995), 103

Rio Grande Butterflybush is growing as a small tree/ large shrub in the gardens at the National Butterfly Center in Mission, TX. Rio Grande Butterflybush is propagated at the National Butterfly Center and is for sale in its nursery.

Do you grow any of the native butterfly bushes mentioned in this article? *Butterfly Gardener Magazine* would be interested to hear your experiences of gardening with any of these plants.  
Email: nababutterflygardener@gmail.com

Photo right: Utah Butterflybush (*Buddleja utahensis*)



## INSTARS: Nectar Garden Papercraft

by Sal Levinson

Everybody loves seeing butterflies and flowers together. That is why nectar gardens are so popular. Many plants make good nectar sources. But some nectar plants can become weeds. *Buddleja* can become weedy in Washington and Oregon. Lantana is a weed in Hawaii. Dandelions are common lawn weeds. But butterflies love these plants. How can we provide for the needs of butterflies while also dealing with the problems caused by these plants?

### Papercraft instructions:

Make a machine copy of the papercraft.

Color the plants and the house.

Cut out card and plants on bold lines

Fold card on dashed lines, unprinted sides together

Cut the six parallel bold lines to make slits

Refold the card on dashed lines, printed sides together. Unfold.

Pinch the center of the elbows on the dotted lines, unprinted sides together.

Fold the bases of the elbows on the dashed lines, printed sides together.

Fold and crease the card so the popups work smoothly.

Glue the *Buddleja* to the center popup elbow.

Glue the lantana to a popup elbow on the left side.

Glue the aster to the popup elbow on the right side.

All done! Do you remember the names of the nectar plants?

**As an undergraduate at UC Berkeley, Sal Levinson studied Conservation of Natural Resources. After graduating, she held several insect related jobs working in the fields of central California, the forests of Connecticut and Idaho, and the labs of Berkeley, discovering and developing her interests in bugs. Sal pursued graduate work in entomology at UC Riverside and at UC Berkeley. She takes pleasure in sharing her interest in butterflies via teacher trainings, educational workshops, presentations, publications and, as of last year, butterfly walks at the UC Botanical Garden.**

