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Attracting Butterflies with Fruit

Flowers aren't the only way to bring butterflies to your garden. Learn about attracting butterflies with fruit too.

by *Jill Staake* on July 23, 2014

Everyone knows that butterflies love flowers. Plant the right ones, and they'll flock to your garden. This is certainly true, but not all butterflies use flower nectar as their primary diet. Some species are more likely to drop by to visit you if you offer some fruit instead, including **Mourning Cloaks** (*Nymphalis antiopa*). Others, like **Red Admirals** (*Vanessa atalanta*) and **Monarchs** (*Danaus plexippus*) enjoy both. Here's the low-down on attracting butterflies with fruit.



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A monarch butterfly enjoying an overripe banana.

Choose juicy fruits. Butterflies will use their proboscis to sip fruit juice just as they would flower nectar, as you can see in the photo of the monarch above. Fruits like strawberries, mangoes, oranges, and watermelon are ideal.

The riper, the better. We don't think of bananas as "juicy", but as they ripen, they become softer and easier for butterflies to ingest. Rather than throwing out those rotting bananas on your counter, slice them open and offer them to the butterflies in your garden.

Change fruit daily. Fruit left out overnight is likely to attract undesirable critters like raccoons, and soon becomes a smelly mess. Put fruit out in the mornings or afternoons when you'll be around to watch – what's the point of attracting butterflies with fruit if you're not there to see the fun?

Use water to repel ants. Butterflies aren't the only insects that will show interest in your fruit. Keep ants away by laying fruit in a shallow dish surrounded by water, which ants won't cross. There's no good way to keep off the wasps and bees, though, so keep kids and pets at a safe distance if you're concerned about them.



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Mourning Cloaks appear in early spring, before fruit is available. They sip sap from trees then instead, but might visit your garden if you offer fruit.

Have you tried offering fruit to butterflies? What tips would you offer to others? Tell us in the comments below.

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