If you are interested in diversifying your agriculture commodities, a Learning Farm Listening Session will be held May 12 at 5:30 p.m. in Nashville at the Extension Homemakers Center. A light meal will be served. Please call in to register, if you are interested in attending.

Learning Farm Listening Session

A Guide to Growing a Butterfly Garden

Site Selection
The ideal location for a butterfly garden is one that provides:

- **Full Sunlight**- Most butterfly plants bloom and therefore need at least 6 hours of direct sun for maximum blooms. The flowers provide the nectar to feed the adult butterflies. Morning sun is better than afternoon sun because it allows the butterflies to use the sunlight to warm up and become active earlier.

- **Good Drainage**- Most butterfly plants need to be planted in a well-drained location. If the proposed butterfly garden area holds water for several days after a rain, either choose a new location or build raised beds. Bed shapes can vary from square, rectangular, triangular, or the shape of your choice. To achieve adequate root growth, however, the bed must be at least 8 inches deep. Bed width should not be more than twice the arm length of whoever will be working in the garden. This will ensure that participants can reach the center of the bed to weed, pick flowers, and observe butterflies without stepping into the bed.

- **Close Proximity to a Water Source**- The butterfly garden will need to be routinely watered during periods of drought. Placing the butterfly garden near an outdoor faucet will make watering an easy chore.

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A Guide to Growing a Butterfly Garden...cont’d

Soil Preparation
Butterfly plants will grow and perform best in well-prepared beds.

- Mark the location and dimensions of the bed. Take a soil sample from the location to check and see if you need lime or fertilizer.
- Remove any existing weeds and grass by digging them out.
- Till the soil about 8 inches deep using a tiller or shovels. Continue to remove belowground parts of unwanted weeds and grass.
- Next, spread a 2-4 inch layer of organic matter, such as compost, bagged manure, soil conditioner, or peat moss. Then, sprinkle general purpose fertilizer following package directions. Sprinkle lime over the area if the soil analysis calls for it.
- Thoroughly incorporate everything into the tilled soil using a tiller or shovel.
- Rake the area smooth.
- Plant
- After preparation, soil in the area will be raised somewhat higher than it was. This desirable and important to make sure the bed drains well during rainy weather.

Annual and Perennials
Some butterfly plants are annuals, meaning they complete their life cycle within one growing season. These plants are removed from the garden when they lose vigor and look bad or are killed by freezes. Warm-season bedding plants can be planted March or April for spring bloom early in the summer.

Butterflies are not active or present during the cold of winter, so cool-season annuals that bloom in the winter are not that important in the butterfly garden. But, cool-season annuals planted from October-February will provide nectar to butterflies in the fall. The plants will provide color in the winter (to make us happy) and they will bloom prolifically in spring from March to the end of May, providing nectar when butterflies are active. ‘Amazon’ dianthus is a good example of an excellent cool-season annual for butterfly gardens.

Other butterfly plants are hardy perennials, meaning they live from year to year and do not have to be regularly replaced like annuals. Some perennial plants die back to the ground during the winter but will emerge again when the weather warms up.

Hardy perennials plants will not need to be replaced unless there is a major insect or disease problem in the garden. Annual plants will need to be replaced each season.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annuals</th>
<th>Perennials</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pentas</td>
<td>Mexican Heather</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marigold</td>
<td>Butterfly Bush</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dianthus</td>
<td>Lantana</td>
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<td>Salvia</td>
<td>Coneflower</td>
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Sprouting Seeds for Food

Sprouting Seeds for Food
Seeds themselves are a very nutritious form of food because they contain proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, and oils that a beginning plant needs to grow. Many of these constituents are increased greatly when the seeds are sprouted.

If their presence in restaurant salad bars and in grocery stores is any indication, the popularity of sprouts is increasing. It’s very easy to grow your own sprouts at home with a minimum of supplies.

Experiment with different types of seeds, but remember that seeds sold for vegetable gardening are often treated with pesticides. Buy
seeds at a health food store. Sprouting seeds are also available from most seed catalogs and some grocery stores and are expressly labelled for this purpose.

**Some Seeds You May Want to Try:**
Alfalfa, dill, onion, sesame, barley, parsley, squash, peanut, sunflower, celery, lentils, pumpkin, chia, lettuce, radish, wheat, corn, mung beans, rye.

Many others may be used, but never use seeds of poisonous plants or seeds that are old or moldy.

**Methods**
Seeds may be sprouted by many methods. The one requiring the least material is sprouting between two paper towels. Seeds are spread thinly between the paper towels, then towels are moistened. Add water when towels start to dry out. Once the seeds have sprouted, they may stick to the towels or may mold if left too long.

Sprout seeds may be sown in a shallow dish or pot filled with light potting soil and watered as needed. As the sprouts grow, they are clipped with scissors for use.

Cheesecloth may be secured onto the jar with a rubber band. It works well, but is a little less messy and wasteful of expensive cheesecloth; those who want to do a lot of sprouting may want to make or purchase a more permanent sprouter top. Stainless steel screening can be secured to the top with a canning jar ring. Metal screens are sold in a variety of mesh sizes for different types of seeds. The only problem with them is that the rings tend to rust (even though the screens don’t). Plastic sprouter tops, therefore, are a successful alternative. These, too, are available in a variety of mesh sizes. One version is a single top in which the mesh size may be changed by moving the inner screen.

Regardless of the jar or screen you choose, the procedure is the same. Start with a small amount of seeds (1 tablespoon to ¼ cup depending on the seed size), and soak in water 12 to 24 hours. Attach screen (small mesh for small seeds, etc.) and pour off the water. Rinse twice in cool water and pour off each time. Tilt the jar bottom in a bowl or near a sink to drain off excess water. Repeat rinsing and draining 2 to 3 times a day to prevent the seeds from turning sour. Sprout rinse water may be used to water house plants.

There is some controversy over whether sprouts are better grown in light or in the dark. It is really a matter of personal preference; however, there may be a slight nutritional advantage to the light-grown sprouts. Sprouts grown in light are greener and have a stronger taste. To keep sprouts white (blanched), put them in a cupboard or other warm, dark place while they are growing. If you choose this method, it is helpful to put a note on a cabinet or refrigerator to remind you to rinse them.

Let sprouts grow until they are the size you want them. Taste at various sizes so you can decide how long to let them grow. Large seeds tend to get soft and become moldy if left too long at room temperature and will lose quality rapidly. As seeds grow, you may want to change to a larger screen so that hulls will wash out before “harvest.” Hulls are edible, but do affect the taste and storage qualities of most seeds.

When sprouts are ready for eating (usually after 3 to 6 days), rinse off excess hulls and drain thoroughly. Store in plastic bags in the refrigerator. Small-seeded sprouts keep fairly well for a week or longer; large seeded ones are best if eaten within 3 to 4 days.
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Sincerely,

Sherry Beaty-Sullivan
County Extension Agent-Agriculture