

Credit for photo on right: Ohio State Weed Lab, The Ohio State University, Bugwood.org



Butterfly Weed

by Lyn Chimera

The Perennial Plant Association has chosen Butterfly Weed, a North American native plant to be Perennial Plant of the Year.


This is only the second time a native has been chosen. The first was bluestar, *Amsonia tabernatemontana*.

Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) is a butterfly magnet. Flowers are a nectar source for many butterflies and leaves are a food source for the monarch butterfly caterpillars. Additionally, butterfly weed is subject to no serious insect or disease

problems. Deer usually avoid it. The only negative about this plant is that it unfortunately has "weed" in its common name. Most people are hesitant to purchase a plant they think is a weed.



Butterfly weed is hardy in USDA Zones 4 to 9 and grows best in full sun with well-drained, sandy, even gravelly soil and is drought tolerant once established. Depending on the site it grows from 12 to 36 inches high. Its flowers range from bright orange to red and even some yellows. The flowers bloom in flat clusters (umbels) which is one reason they are preferred by many pollinators.

Butterfly weed is a perfect selection for a full-sun meadow or home garden. Flower arrangers find the flowers make long-lasting cut flowers and even are good as dried flowers. They are late to come up in the spring and don't transplant well due to a long tap root (helps them be drought tolerant). Once planted it's best to leave them be. If you have the appropriate conditions, give this **excellent native** a try! 



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