

## **Butterfly Garden at Daggerwing Nature Center Earns State Recognition**

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Daggerwing Nature Center's butterfly garden was recently recognized by the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc. (FFGC) as a certified butterfly sanctuary. The garden was recognized because it attracts a variety of butterflies that are common to this area of Florida.

In order to be certified by the FFGC, a garden must have many types of native nectar and host plants for butterflies and a variety of the needed habitats. In addition, it must not use pesticides. The application process includes completing a form, providing a list of all the plants and butterflies in the garden, submitting several photos of the butterflies and having a site visit with an agent from the FFGC.

Daggerwing Nature Center is named after the Ruddy Daggerwing butterfly that can be seen in the garden and natural area. The garden also attracts the Zebra Longwing (our State butterfly), Gulf Fritillary, Julia, Monarch, Queen, White Peacock, Atala, Red Admiral, Polydamas, Black and Giant Swallowtails and a variety of Sulphurs.

In order to have a successful butterfly sanctuary, a garden must have both nectar plants for the adult butterfly and host plants for the caterpillars so that the entire life cycle of the butterfly can be completed within one garden. Adult butterflies lay their eggs on the host plants, and then the caterpillars eat the leaves of the host plants once they hatch out of their eggs. If host plants aren't present in a garden, you may find the adult butterflies feeding, but they must go elsewhere to reproduce. If nectar plants aren't found in a garden, the butterflies may visit the garden to lay eggs, but must go elsewhere to feed.

Butterflies are finicky eaters; each species of caterpillar will only eat specific plants, and it is different from one species to the next. In order to attract many species of butterflies, there must be a variety of these types of plants specifically suited to the butterflies that are found in that area. It is also necessary to not use pesticides or chemicals that could be harmful to the caterpillars and butterflies. It is also necessary to provide a variety of habitats: sunny, partial shade, shade and damp areas where butterflies can drink.

### **You can start a butterfly garden!**

Starting a butterfly garden is easy, and it actually may be less work to keep up than other types of gardens! The native plants that live here in south Florida that are needed for a butterfly garden are able to survive on the amount of rain that nature provides, so it may reduce the amount of watering you would have to do! (Of course, freshly planted plants will need to be watered until they become established.) Also, the caterpillars naturally "prune" the host plants by eating the leaves, so you don't have to do that either! (Don't worry. Even if a plant is eaten bare by the caterpillars, the plants are adapted to this and will grow new leaves!)

Daggerwing provides classes on butterfly gardening that include the plants you need to attract specific species. For information, visit the Program Calendar link on Daggerwing's website, [www.pbcparks.com/nature/daggerwing\\_nature\\_center](http://www.pbcparks.com/nature/daggerwing_nature_center) or in the Calendar of Events link on [www.pbcparks.com](http://www.pbcparks.com).

### **Where is the Daggerwing butterfly garden?**

The Daggerwing gardens are located in front of the nature center, but butterflies may also be seen all along the boardwalk in the natural area. Butterflies are more likely to be found in large numbers during the warmer months but may be seen year-round in Florida. They are ectothermic (body temperature is regulated by the environment around them), so they have a tendency to be active during warm and sunny weather. The gardens are open daily, sunrise to sunset. Daggerwing Nature Center is located in the South County Regional Park at 11200 Park Access Road, Boca Raton. For more information call 629-8760.