LOST YOUR BUTTERFLY BUSH? TRY NATIVES NEXT TIME
Lee Royer, Frederick County Master Gardener

Winter 2014 was particularly hard on the popular garden scrub Butterfly Bush (*Buddleja or Buddleia*). While some gardeners are distressed about this, Frederick County Master Gardeners view it as an opportunity to replant with Maryland friendly alternatives.

Although loved by many, unfortunately the Chinese imported Butterfly Bush doesn’t always play well with others in the garden, often escaping to run wild over native species with more to offer local eco systems. Studies show native caterpillars don’t even like the taste of Buddleia leaves. The National Park Service in the Mid-Atlantic region has placed Buddleja on their “Plants to Watch” list and offers this advice: “If you find these plants in the wild, outside of a planted landscape in an area that is supposed to be managed as natural habitat, it would be prudent to target them for removal.”

The National Park Service has this to say about the Butterfly Bush: “Buddleja davidii Franch of the Snapdragon family (Scrophulariaceae) Orange-eye butterfly-bush, or summer lilac, is native to southwestern China and was introduced into North America around 1900 for ornamental purposes. It escaped from plantings and occurs in scattered locations in the Northeast, Southeast and Mid-Atlantic and in the western U.S. from southern California to northern Washington…It spreads by seed which is dispersed mostly by wind.” Not a stellar recommendation from the NPS or MGs.

Good choices do exist. Here are native plants for drawing butterflies and beneficial insects into your garden: Scrubs: North American species of Spirea, Abelia, Wiegela, Perennial Hibiscus, and Nine Bark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*). Perennials: Asters, Bronze Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), Coreopsis, Sedums, Lantana, and Coneflowers (*Echinacea*, *Rudbeckia*). Annuals: Pentas, Verbenia, Mexican Marigolds (*Tagetes lucida*), and Delphiniums. These and many other readily available, suitable plants can be found at local outlets such as the North Frederick Lowes, which has a knowledgeable garden center staff including native plant specialist Bonnie Duggan, FCMG 2001 alumnus.

Also recommended by the NPS and MGs are the following butterfly- welcoming plants: Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), Sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*), Virginia Sweetspire (*Itea virginica*), and Ironweed, New York Ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*)

So instead of rushing out to replace that dead Butterfly Bush with the same old thing, consider shopping around for something Maryland butterflies (and you) may like even better.

For more information on invasive species to avoid and suggestions for alternatives, go to The National Park Service at Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas Revised & Updated –

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http://www.nps.gov/planTs/alien/pubs/midatlantic/toc.htm

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