

**Butterfly bush are quite easy to grow**, but you do need to know a bit about their preferences and requirements to achieve maximum success:

1. Butterfly bush need full sun. When we say full sun, we mean it – butterfly bush requires a minimum of 8 hours of bright sunlight. Even in warm climates, plant them where they get no fewer than 6 hours of sun.
2. Butterfly bush need perfect drainage. Their roots are sensitive to rotting, and if they spend any amount of time in wet soil, they can be set back or even die. Most of the time, if you lose a butterfly bush after winter, it wasn't due to low temperatures or snow or ice – it was because the plant sat in cold, wet soil in fall or spring.
3. Butterfly bush can grow in clay soil but require a few special accommodations. Because they need good drainage and dislike cold wet conditions, there are a few tips that will increase your success with butterfly bush if you have clay soil:
  - Never amend the soil. Don't add top soil, potting soil, compost or anything at planting time. Plant directly into your natural soil. This is true for all shrubs, but is even more important with butterfly bush, as amending any soil, and particularly clay soil, can cause drainage problems.
  - Plant "high" – instead of positioning the plant even with the ground level like you would other plants, dig a slightly shallower hole (yep, that means less work!) and position it so that the base of the plant is a bit higher than the ground. This creates a small "hill" that encourages water to drain away from the plant rather than settle around it.
  - Avoid mulching directly around your butterfly bush. Mulch is a great idea for other species of plants, but in clay soil, it can hold too much moisture. Go ahead and mulch your beds, but give your butterfly bush a bit of clearance, and never mulch all the way up to the main stems.
4. Prune in spring, after the new growth emerges. Many people cut their butterfly bush back in autumn, as part of their fall clean up. But particularly in cold climates, this can leave your butterfly bush more susceptible to damage over winter. Do not prune until you see green buds on the stems. Make your cuts just above where big, healthy leaf buds have formed. It can take several weeks into spring for new growth to show up - be patient and resist the urge to cut them back too early.
5. Be patient. Butterfly bushes tend to be one of the later plants to leaf out in spring. Even if everything else in your landscape is turning green, that doesn't mean you've lost your butterfly bush. Many people recommend waiting til as late as Father's Day (the third Sunday in June) to be certain their butterfly bush perished. It can be very surprising to see how quickly a butterfly bush can recover, even if it takes that long to come back!
6. Don't overwater. Particularly if you have clay soil, watch watering carefully. If you have an irrigation system, be sure it's not inundating your butterfly bush. Signs of overwatering include weak stems, fewer flowers, and dieback.