



Garden Tips

Meet the Smallest Buddleia

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When it comes to attracting butterflies, not much tops the Buddleia, or butterfly bush. Its varieties are plentiful, blooming in colors ranging from purple to yellow to white, on bushes that can reach over ten feet tall.

Now there are options for the gardener who wants a smaller plant. One of them is Buddleia 'White Ball.' I have 'White Ball' in my garden and can't praise it enough. Unlike dwarf cultivars of years past, 'White Ball' is a true lady, maintaining a spread of about 3 x 3 feet in my sunny border planting. Its foliage is silver-gray, and by early summer it's blanketed with white panicles, flowering non-stop through frost. I've never seen so many blooms on a Buddleia.

I deadhead, but there's not much need for pruning. If you like, you can prune 'White Ball' to 12-18 inches in the spring. It would look lovely as part of a moon garden.

Other varieties of buddleia are even smaller. Buddleia Lo & Behold 'Blue Chip' is a miniature buddleia. With fragrant, short spikes of lavender-blue, it tops out at three feet, making it a good choice for smaller plots, groundcover, or even a container. This is the first in a series of miniatures, with more on the way.

'Blue Chip' blooms continuously from mid-summer to frost *without* deadheading. Pruning isn't generally needed, but you can trim it back to 12 inches in the spring. Try it alongside dark purple heucheras, blue hostas, and white-flowering annuals.

Be careful when you shop for your buddleia, because the word "dwarf" is used in many contexts, not all of them to describe a small plant. Some buddleias labeled as dwarf can grow five feet tall and at least as wide. In other cases, "dwarf" refers to leaf and panicle size, not height. So always check the label.

Buddleia are wonderful for sunny, well-drained spots, and are extremely low maintenance. In dry weather, check under the leaves for spider mites (spray with a sharp stream of water). Remove damaged or dead growth in the spring, and cut back the branch tips for a fuller bush and improved blooms. Once established, they're heat and drought tolerant, and definitely deer resistant. Then sit back and watch the butterflies and hummingbirds arrive.



A swallowtail butterfly visits the author's Buddleia 'White Ball'