

'A little piece of quiet nature'



CORRESPONDENT/MARTINE TAYLOR

A queen butterfly collects nectar from a Mexican flame vine in Felicia Tappan's garden in Duette.

Duette butterfly farm debuts public exhibit

By MARI ROBYN JONES

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DUETTE — For Betty Stewart, “a little piece of quiet nature” is in Felicia Tappan’s garden.

“Look at all the activity around,” Stewart said. “They say, ‘Busy as a bee.’ They should say ‘Busy as a butterfly.’”

pan Nurseries Inc., a butterfly farm in Duette.

During the spring and summer, Tappan and three workers planned and built the garden, which attracts hundreds on butterflies, on about a half-acre of land that was once a sandpit.

Last month, Tappan hosted a grand opening for the garden, which she calls

Tappan built the exhibit to show people how they can create their own butterfly gardens at home.

“It adds beauty to your yard,” she said. “Butterfly gardening is like painting your yard with colors.”

She sells the plants in her garden, and gives tours and advice at classes held under a tent in the exhibit.

Butterfly farm in Duette welcomes visitors to exhibit

BUTTERFLY FROM 1H

art's husband, Paul.

"That's amazing, that this one thing turns into a butterfly," he said.

The entire life cycle of a butterfly plays out in the garden.

Adult butterflies first mate, and then the female butterfly drops her eggs on the leaf of a host plant. She will lay 300 eggs, but only two or three will survive due to natural predators like wasps and frogs.

The egg develops into a caterpillar, which eats to grow larger. The caterpillar turns into a pupa, which develops in a hard shell called a chrysalis. These steps take between five and seven days each.

From the chrysalis, a beautiful butterfly emerges.

"And the terrible tragedy is that they don't live that long," said Stewart's mother-in-law, Margaret.

On average, an adult butterfly lives for only a week.

Even with a butterfly's short life-span, Tappan said she hopes her business will serve customers for the long-term.

She plans to expand the commercial side of the company. That means increasing the number of butterfly plants, breeding the insects and selling them to brides for weddings, widows for funerals, small butterfly gardeners, and to businesses that have butterfly exhibits.

Her farm can expand up to three acres.



STAFF MAP / PETE SMITH



CORRESPONDENT/MARTINE TAYLOR

Felicia Tappan removes a Long Wing Zebra butterfly that has hatched from its pupa and is fully developed and ready to fly.

Interested?

What: Tappan Nurseries Inc., which specializes in butterfly gardening.

Where: 30902 Taylor Grade Road, Duette; take U.S. 301 North to State Road 62 East.

Hours: By appointment Tuesday through Saturday. The next tours and classes will be offered Nov. 19 and 26; reservations are needed.

Cost: \$3 per person for the tour and class.

Information: Call Felicia Tappan at 776-1480 or visit the Web site at www.tappanfarm.com.



Paul, Betty and Margaret Stewart enjoy the plants and butterflies as they walk around the garden.



Margaret Stewart was given a butterfly to release and makes a wish before it flies.

