

# Puddling

Yet another use for manure.



Photos by John Brandauer

Occasionally butterflies will land on the ground to sip water from damp soil; they may not be seeking water alone. This behavior is called puddling. Males are more likely to puddle, the salts, minerals and amino acids in the manure may increase their fertility.

You can easily enhance your butterfly habitat, possibly increasing the abundance of butterflies, with this simple inexpensive project.

## Tools

Garden trowel

## Materials

A shallow watertight container (garbage can lid, large Tupperware™ container, plant pot saucer, bird bath top, leftover piece of pond liner, be creative)

Mulch

Builder's sand (play sand is a bit too fine)

Manure (always my favorite ingredient), preferably with added humus for moisture retention.

Builder's sand is available at Home Depot with the masonry products; manure with humus is in the garden section.

Start by leveling an area for your container. The container above is a glazed pot saucer, 14" in diameter, 2" deep. The top edge should be a half-inch or so above the mulch, when we are done. If your container is more than a couple of inches deep, excavate as needed. With the container in place, make your mix.

The mixture need not be precise, one part manure to six or eight parts, by volume of builders sand works. Both of which are almost always on hand here as amendments to our heavy clay soil. Mix them together thoroughly, then add water, and be mindful our goal is to create a damp area, not a lake. Some wildlife gardeners add other ingredients; a pinch of salt, fermenting fruit, stale beer, ripe fish... We do not. A few small stones<sup>1</sup> added will provide a safe high spot if rain increases the water level and might also be used for sun basking.

Add mulch, and wait. The diminutive Dusky Azure above appeared within ten minutes of completion, but this is certainly not typical.

<sup>1</sup> Good gardening practice, IMHO dictates the removal of stones larger than a walnut, when planting. We have LOTS!

Information compiled from the web, supplemented by our experiences.

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