

National Wildlife Federation Guide



Attracting Butterflies to Your Backyard, Schoolyard, Workplace, or Community Wildlife Habitat

The first step to attracting adult butterflies, lively and colorful additions to any garden, is planting flowers with nutritious nectar. Butterflies and native plants have coevolved and are now dependent upon each other. The plants provide enticing nectar and in return are pollinated by visiting butterflies. Therefore, native plants are the best choice for guaranteed butterfly presence. Adults searching for nectar are attracted to red, yellow, orange, pink or purple blossoms that are flat-topped or clustered and have short flower tubes which allow the butterflies to reach the nectar with their proboscis. It is important to avoid using herbicides and pesticides as these will kill butterflies in both their adult and larval phases. Nectar producing plants should be grown in sunny areas that are protected from strong winds. Butterflies need sun for orientation and to warm their wings for flight. Calm breezes allow them to fly freely. Flat stones in your garden are places for butterflies to rest and bask in the sun. Male butterflies will congregate near damp areas and shallow puddles to drink water and extract salts. The adult life span averages 6 to 20 days, with the range from a few days to over six months. In temperate regions of the country various species are active from early spring until late fall while in the southern parts of the U.S. some butterfly species are active year-round. Butterflies need nectar throughout the adult phase of their life span, so plant for continuous bloom.



Nectar Plants

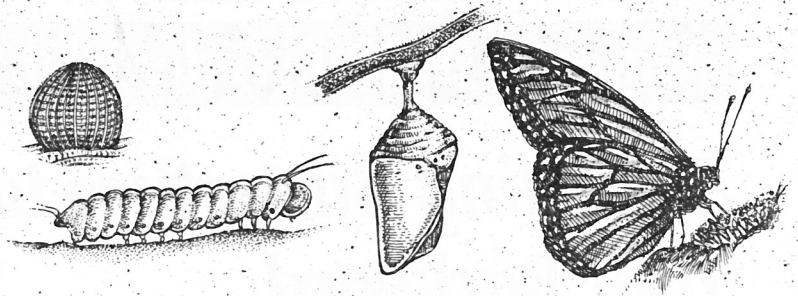
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| <i>Aster</i> spp. | Butterfly-weed (<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>) |
| Ironweed (<i>Vernonia</i> spp.) | Purple Coneflower (<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>) |
| Azaleas (<i>Rhododendron</i> spp.) | Buttonbush (<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>) |
| Joe-pye-weeds (<i>Eupatorium</i> spp.) | Sumacs (<i>Rhus</i> spp.) |
| Bergemots (<i>Monarda</i> spp.) | Cardinal-flower (<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>) |
| Milkweeds (<i>Asclepias</i> spp.) | Sunflowers (<i>Helianthus</i> spp.) |
| Black-eyed Susan (<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>) | <i>Ceanothus</i> spp. |
| <i>Phlox</i> spp. | Sweet Pepperbush (<i>Clethra alnifolia</i>) |
| Blazing Stars (<i>Liatris</i> spp.) | <i>Coreopsis</i> spp. |
| Pickeralweed (<i>Pontederia cordata</i>) | <i>Verbena</i> spp. |
| | Goldenrods (<i>Solidago</i> spp.) |

Butterfly Facts

- ▼ Over 700 species of butterflies are found in North America but very few are garden pests.
- ▼ Adult butterflies range in size from the half inch pygmy blue found in southern California to the giant female Queen Alexandra's birdwing of New Guinea, which measures about 10 inches from wing tip to wing tip.
- ▼ Butterfly tarsi or "feet" possess a sense similar to taste: contact with sweet liquids such as nectar causes the proboscis to uncoil.
- ▼ Millions of shinglelike, overlapping scales give butterfly wings their colors and patterns. Metallic, iridescent hues come from faceted scales that refract light; solid colors are from pigmented scales.
- ▼ During the time from hatching to pupating (forming the pupa or chrysalis), the caterpillar may increase its body size more than 30,000 times.
- ▼ The chrysalises or pupae of many common gossamer wings — a group of butterflies which includes the blues, hairstreaks and elfins — are capable of producing weak sounds. By flexing and rubbing together body segment membranes, sounds are generated which may frighten off small predators and parasites.

Caterpillar Food Sources

In order to insure that butterflies will reside in your yard*, rather than infrequently pass through, your garden should include host plants that serve as larval food. Butterflies almost invariably lay their eggs on the host plant preferred by the caterpillar. Do not panic when you see chewed foliage; usually no permanent damage is done to the plants. Some common butterflies and their food plants are:



Acmon Blue - buckwheats, lupines, milkvetch
American Painted Lady - cudweeds, everlasts, antennarias
Anise Swallowtail - anise, fennel, angelica, parsnip, mountain parsley
Baltimore Checkerspot - turtlehead, hairy beardtongue, English plantain
Banded Hairstreak - oaks, hickory, walnuts
Baird's Swallowtail - dragon sagebrush
Black Swallowtail - parsley, dill, fennel, Queen Anne's lace, common rue
Buckeye - ruellia, snapdragon, plantain, verbena, toadflax, monkeyflower
Cabbage White - many plants in mustard family and nasturtium
Checkered White - peppergrass, winter cress, bladderpods, tumble mustards
Checkered Skipper - mallows, sida, globe mallows, hollyhock, velvet-leaf
Clouded Sulphur - clovers
Cloudless Sulphur - cassias
Common Sooty-wing - lamb's quarters, amaranth tumbleweed
Common Wood-nymph - grasses
Coral Hairstreak - wild black cherry, American and chickasaw plum, black chokeberry
Dogface - lead plant, indigo bush, prairie clover, false indigo.
Dreamy Dusky Wing - willows, poplar; aspen, birch
Dun Skipper - sedges, grasses including purpletop
Eastern Tailed Blue - clover, trefoils, peas, vetches, alfalfa
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail - wild black cherry, ash, tulip tree, willow, sweetbay, basswood
Field Crescent - asters
Fiery Skipper - Bermuda grass, St. Augustine grass, bluegrass
Giant Swallowtail - prickly ash, citrus, common rue, hoptree, gas plant, torchwood
Goatweed Butterfly - goatweed, Texas croton, prairie tea
Gorgone Checkerspot - sunflowers and other sunflower members; lysimachia
Gray Comma - gooseberry, azalea, elm
Gray Hairstreak - many pea and mallow family members, many others.
Great Purple Hairstreak - mistletoe, <i>Phoradendron flavescens</i>
Great Spangled Fritillary - violets
Gulf Fritillary - maypops, other passion vines
Hackberry Butterfly - hackberry, sugarberry, <i>Celtis spp.</i>
Henry's Elfin - redbud, American, dahoon and yaupon hollies, maple-leaved viburnum, blueberries
Hoary Edge - tick trefoils, false indigo, lespedezas
Large Marble - rock cress, winter cress, mustards, wall flower
Least Skipperling - grasses including cutgrass, bluegrass
Little Copper - sheep sorrel, curled dock

Little Wood Satyr - grasses including orchard grass, centipede grass and St. Augustine grass
Long-tailed Skipper - witeria, pole beans, tick-trefoil, butterfly pea, hog peanut
Monarch - milkweeds
Mourning Cloak - willows, American elm, quaking aspen, paper birch, hackberry
Painted Lady (Cosmopolite) - thistles, mallows, nievitas, yellow fiddleneck
Pearl Crescent - asters
Pine White - pines, douglas fir, balsam fir
Pipe-vine Swallowtail - Dutchman's pipe, wooly pipevine, Virginia snakeroot
Pygmy Blue - saltbush, lamb's quarters, pigweed
Question Mark - elm, hackberry, nettles, hops
Reakirt's Blue - plants in the pea and mimosa families including mesquite, milkvetch
Red Admiral/White Admiral - wild cherries, black oaks, aspens, yellow and black birch
Roadside Skipper - bluegrass, oats, Bermuda grass
Sachem - grasses, including Bermuda grass
Silver-spotted Skipper - locusts, wisteria, other legumes
Snout Butterfly - hackberries
Spicebush Swallowtail - sassafras, spicebush
Spring Azure - dogwoods, wild black cherry, viburnums, staghorn sumac, others
Sulphurs - clover, peas, vetch, alfalfa, asters, <i>Cassia spp.</i>
Sylvan Hairstreak - willows
Tawny Emperor - hackberry, sugarberry
Two-tailed Swallowtail - hoptree, chokecherry, ash
Variiegated Fritillary - passion flower, maypop, violets, stoncrop, purslane
Viceroy - willows, cottonwood, aspen
Western Tailed Blue - vetches, milkvetches
Western Tiger Swallowtail - willow, plum, alder, sycamore, hoptree, ash
Western White - rock cress, peppergrass, tumble mustard
Woodland Skipper - grasses
Zebra - passion vines
Zebra Swallowtail - pawpaw

The National Wildlife Federation's Backyard Wildlife Habitat program is a national public education and certification program started in 1973 that engages people in making a place for wildlife at home, school, work, and in communities. To find out more, visit www.nwf.org on the Internet or call (703) 790-4100.



* Note: please check your field guide to know which of these species may reside in your region.