



Bringing Wildlife Home

Attract Butterflies



Many butterflies and native flowering plants depend on each other for survival and reproduction.

- **Install native flowering plants** – Because many butterflies and native flowering plants have co-evolved over time and depend on each other for survival and reproduction, it is particularly important to install native flowering plants local to your geographic area. Native plants provide butterflies with the nectar or foliage they need as caterpillars and adults. Adult butterflies may accidentally mistake a non-native, invasive plant for a good egg-laying site, which could prevent the survival of its offspring. Grow your nectar-producing native plants in sunny areas that are protected from strong winds. The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center has lists of recommended native plants by region and state at www.wildflower.org/collections.
- **Plant type and color is important** – Adult butterflies are attracted to red, yellow, orange, pink, and purple blossoms that are flat-topped or clustered, and have short flower tubes.
- **Plant for continuous bloom** - Butterflies need nectar throughout the adult phase of their life span. Try to plant so that when one plant stops blooming, another begins.
- **Get them to stay** – To ensure that butterflies will take up residence in your habitat rather than just pass through, your garden should include “host plants” that serve as larval (caterpillar) food.
- **Avoid herbicides and pesticides** – These types of lawn care and plant maintenance products contain chemicals that will kill butterflies and other beneficial insects in both their adult and larval phases.
- **Provide a place to rest** – Butterflies need sun for orientation and to warm their wings for flight. Place flat stones in your garden to provide space for butterflies to rest and bask in the sun.

Please check with your local or state native plant society to be sure that the plants you are using to attract butterflies to your garden are native to your region.

Inspiring Americans to protect wildlife for our children’s future.

National Wildlife Federation · 11100 Wildlife Center Drive · Reston, VA 20190

www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife



- **Give them a place for puddling**– Butterflies often congregate on wet sand and mud to partake in “puddling”, drinking water and extracting minerals from damp puddles. Place coarse sand in a shallow pan and then insert the pan in the soil of your habitat. Make sure to keep the sand moist.

Common Butterflies and the Plants Their Caterpillars Eat

Acmon Blue- buckwheat, lupines, milkvetch
American Painted Lady- cudweed, everlast
Baird’s Swallowtail- dragon sagebrush
Black Swallowtail- parsley, dill, fennel, Queen Anne’s lace, common rue
Cabbage White- members of mustard family
Coral Hairstreak - wild black cherry, American and chickasaw plum, black chokeberry
Dun Skipper - sedges, grasses including purpletop
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail - wild black cherry, ash, tulip tree, willow, sweetbay, basswood
Giant Swallowtail - prickly ash, citrus, common rue, hoptree, gas plant, torchwood
Gray Comma - gooseberry, azalea, elm
Great Purple Hairstreak - mistletoe
Gulf Fritillary - maypops, other passion vines
Henry’s Elfin - redbud, dahoon and yaupon hollies, maple-leaved viburnum, blueberries
Monarch - milkweeds
Painted Lady (Cosmopolite) - thistles, mallows, nievitas, yellow fiddleneck
Pygmy Blue - saltbush, lamb’s quarters, pigweed
Red Admiral/White Admiral- wild cherries, black oaks, aspens, yellow and black birch
Silver-spotted Skipper- locusts, wisteria, other legumes
Spicebush Swallowtail- sassafras, spicebush
Sulphurs- clover, peas, vetch, alfalfa, asters
Variegated Fritillary- passion flower, maypop, violets, stonecrop, purslane
Viceroy- willows, cottonwood, aspen
Western Tailed Blue- vetches, milkvetches
Western Tiger Swallowtail- willow, plum, alder, sycamore, hoptree, ash
Woodland Skipper - grasses
Zebra Swallowtail- pawpaw

To search for butterflies in your state or county, visit www.butterfliesandmoths.org/map.



Visit www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife for more information.

Photo Credits

Front: Gulf Fritillary, H. Cheek; Indian Paintbrush, iStockphoto.com; Rufous Hummingbird, iStockphoto.com/NaturesDisplay
Bullfrog, iStockphoto.com/Steve VanHorn; Tree, iStockphoto.com/Christine Balderas; Chipmunk, iStockphoto.com/
Jill Lang; Swallowtail butterfly, Denise Gaskill.

Back: Butterfly/Flower, Photodisc