



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](http://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.
- **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.

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.



- **Watch for butterflies and other wildlife in your region** – go to Wildlife Watch at [www.nwf.org/wildlifewatch/](http://www.nwf.org/wildlifewatch/) to learn all about a national nature watching program for people of all ages.

## Common Butterflies and the Plants Their Caterpillars Eat

**Acon 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 get a list of butterflies in your state or county, visit [www.butterfliesandmoths.org/checklist](http://www.butterfliesandmoths.org/checklist).



Visit [www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife](http://www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife) for more information.

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