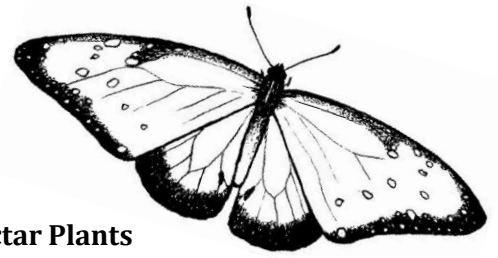


Attracting Butterflies to Your Central Florida Backyard

By Sharon LaPlante, Hernando Chapter FNPS

Attracting butterflies to your backyard is a very rewarding experience and is quite possibly easier than you think. This is because the plants that are an integral part of a butterfly's life cycle are all around in nature and in our landscape. Butterflies require two entirely different types of plants to complete their life cycle. The food requirements of adult butterflies are different than those of their young. Flower nectar is the preferred food choice of most adult butterflies. When planting nectar flowers keep in mind that adult butterflies need sunlight in order to warm their wings; therefore, place the majority of nectar plants in a sunny location. It is also important to plan your landscape to provide blooms throughout the year to ensure a continuous supply of nectar. Female butterflies taste a variety of plants in order to locate the proper food source for their young, and once the correct host plant is located will typically lay their eggs on the new growth. Each type of butterfly uses a particular plant or family of plants to nourish its young and will only lay eggs on those plants. In order to attract the largest variety of butterflies, grow an abundance and variety of nectar and larval food plants in several locations throughout your landscape. Caterpillars feed continuously and voraciously for a few weeks until they have completed several molts (or instars) and are mature enough to pupate. Most then move away from the host plant and search for a limb or twig on which to perform this last stage in their life. However, some butterflies pupate in leaf litter. The last molt will develop into a very hard outer case called a chrysalis wherein metamorphosis takes place, and in approximately two weeks an adult butterfly will emerge. The most crucial caveat for butterfly gardeners is *do not use pesticides*.



Florida Nectar Plants

Asclepia tuberosa
(Butterfly milkweed)
Symphotrichum carolinianum
(Climbing aster)
Bidens alba (Spanish needles)
Carphephorus corymbosus (Paintbrush)
Cirsium spp. (Thistle)
Elephantopus elatus (Elephant's foot)
Erythrina herbacea (Coral bean)
Gaillardia pulchella (Blanket flower)
Garberia heterophylla (Garberia)
Glandularia tampensis (Tampa vervain)
Hamelia patens (Firebush)
Ipomoea cordatotriloba (Morning glory)
Ipomoea hederifolia (Scarlet morning glory)
Liatris spp. (Blazing star)
Lonicera sempervirens (Coral honeysuckle)
Prunus spp. (Wild plum and wild cherry)
Ruellia caroliniensis (Wild petunia)
Salvia coccinea (Tropical sage)
Salvia lyrata (Lyre-leaf sage)
Stokesia laevis (Stokes' aster)
Verbesina virginica (Frostweed)
Vernonia gigantea (Ironweed)

Florida Butterfly Facts

- The giant swallowtail's wingspan can reach up to 5 inches, making it our largest butterfly.
- The eastern pygmy blue is approximately ½-inch in size, making it our smallest butterfly.
- Butterflies live an average of 2 to 4 weeks.
- Monarch butterflies can live up to 8 months.
- Butterflies taste with sensory receptors on their feet.
- The polydamas swallowtail doesn't have tails.
- Butterflies drink from mud puddles and water droplets.
- There are over 160 species of butterflies in Florida.
- A butterfly's tongue is 3 times longer than its body.

Caterpillar Food Sources

If you plant it, they will come... So don't be alarmed when it is eaten. It will grow back!

SWALLOWTAILS

Black swallowtail – wild chervil (*Chaerophyllum*), wild carrot (*Daucus*), bishop's weed (*Ptilimnium capillaceum*)

Giant swallowtail – hoptree (*Ptelea*), Hercules' club (*Xanthoxylum clava-herculis*), prickly ash (*Xanthoxylum americanum*)

Palamedes swallowtail – bay trees (*Persea*), spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), pond spice (*Litsea aestivalis*)

Pipevine swallowtail – pipevines (*Aristolochia*)

Polydamas swallowtail – pipevines (*Aristolochia*)

Spicebush swallowtail – bay trees (*Persea*), spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), pond spice (*Litsea aestivalis*)

Tiger swallowtail – ash (*Fraxinus*), tulip tree (*Liriodendrum tulipiferum*), sweet bay (*Magnolia virginiana*)

Zebra swallowtail – pawpaws (*Asimina*)

WHITES

Checkered white – peppergrass (*Lepidium virginicum*)

European cabbage white – peppergrass (*Lepidium virginicum*)

Great southern white – saltwort (*Batis maritima*), sea rocket (*Cakile*), peppergrass (*Lepidium virginicum*)

SULPHURS

Barred sulphur – joint vetch (*Aeschynomene*), pencil flower (*Stylosanthus*)

Cloudless sulphur – partridge pea (*Chamaecrista*), cassia (*Senna*)

Dainty sulphur – Spanish needles (*Bidens alba*)

BLUES

Cassius blue – milk pea (*Galactia*), wild plumbago (*Plumbago scandens*)

Ceraunus blue – alicia (*Chapmannia floridana*)

Eastern pygmy blue – glasswort (*Salicornia*), saltwort (*Batis*)

HAIRSTREAKS

Gray hairstreak – partridge pea (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*)

Great purple hairstreak – mistletoe (*Poradendron serotinum*)

Red-banded hairstreak – oaks (*Quercus*)

White M hairstreak – oaks (*Quercus*)

BRUSH-FOOTED BUTTERFLIES

American painted lady – cudweed (*Gnaphalium* spp.)

Buckeye – blueheart (*Buchnera americana*), toadflax (*Linaria canadensis*), false foxglove (*Agalinis*)

Gulf fritillary – yellow passionflower (*Passiflora lutea*), maypop (*P. incarnata*), corky-stem passionvine (*P. suberosa*)

Phaeon crescent – carpetweed (*Lippia nodiflora*)

Question mark – elm (*Ulmus*), hackberry (*Celtis laevigata*)

Red Admiral – false nettle (*Boehmeria cylindrica*), burning nettle (*Urtica urens*), pellitory (*Parietaria*)

Red-spotted purple – coastal plain willow (*Salix caroliniana*)

Variiegated fritillary – passionvines (*Passiflora*), violets (*Viola*)

Viceroy – coastal plain willow (*Salix caroliniana*)

White peacock – water hyssop (*Bacopa*)

Zebra – yellow passionflower (*Passiflora lutea*), maypop (*P. incarnata*), corky-stem passionvine (*P. suberosa*)

BRUSH-FOOTED BUTTERFLIES

Hackberry – elm (*Ulmus*), hackberry (*Celtis laevigata*)

Tawny emperor – elm (*Ulmus*), hackberry (*Celtis laevigata*)

MILKWEED BUTTERFLIES

Monarch – milkweeds (*Asclepias*), white vine (*Sarcostemma*)

Queen – milkweeds (*Asclepias*), white vine (*Sarcostemma*)

Soldier – milkweeds (*Asclepias*), white vine (*Sarcostemma*)

SATYRS

Carolina satyr – grasses (*Poaceae*) such as wood oats

SNOUT BUTTERFLY

Snout butterfly – elm (*Ulmus*), hackberry (*Celtis laevigata*)

SKIPPERS (partial list)

Giant yucca skipper – yucca (*Yucca*)

Long-tailed skipper – beggarweed (*Desmodium incanum*)

*Consult a field guide to learn more about the butterflies in our area