Host and Nectar plants for Southeast Texas Butterflies

Texas Master Naturalist – Sabine Neches Chapter

list compiled by Kathy Smith

Tips for successful butterfly gardening:

- **Choose a sunny location (**6-8 hours of sun) with nearby shrubs or trees for protection from wind, rain, weather and predators.
- **Provide a water source.** This can be a small pool or shallow dish with pebbles to hold water.
- **Mix it up.** Plant diverse nectar-rich flowers and specific host plants for butterflies. Create layers of nectar source heights. Don't forget trees and shrubs.
- **Spread the joy.** Select plants with different blooming times to provide a continuous food and nectar supply from Spring to Fall. A mix of perennials and annuals will provide year-round interest.
- **Plant in groups**. Groups of 3 to 5, or more, plants attract butterflies more effectively than single plants.
- **Stay native!** Whenever possible choose plants that are native to your area. Butterflies are adapted to local, native plants that often don't need fertilizers or chemicals to keep them healthy and require less care than non-native plants. Be wary of cultivars of native plants that have been selected for desired characteristics not always compatible with the needs of pollinators including butterflies. A plant label with the genera and species followed by a name in single quotes indicates a cultivar.
- **Go organic.** Don't use any chemical herbicides or pesticides as these can harm butterflies and other beneficial insects. Remember, caterpillars are baby butterflies or moths!
- **Leave the leaves**. Many butterflies, moths, beneficial insects, and other wildlife shelter and overwinter in fallen leaves. If you don't want them on the grass, you can rake them in a pile around trees, over the roots of perennials, or in a designated place out of the way.

"If something isn't eating your plants, then your garden is not part of the ecosystem"

BUTTERFLY	HOST (LARVA FOOD)	NECTAR (ADULT FOOD)
Monarch *Danaus plexippus*	Asclepias sp. (milkweeds)	Milkweeds, lantana, frostweed, sunflowers, goldenrod, thistles, coreopsis, liatris sp., asters, and mistflower
Queen *Danaus gilippus*	Asclepias sp. (milkweeds) and dogbanes	Milkweeds, mistflower, frogfruit, lantana, bidens, and boneset.
Viceroy *Limenitis archippus*	Willows and poplars	Thistles, milkweeds, and most nectar-producing flowers.
Black Swallowtail *Papilio polyxenes*	Fennel, dill, parsley, and Queen Anne's Lace	Asclepias sp., clover, Joe Pye weed, Ironweed, lantana, and coneflower
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail *Papilio glaucus*	Sweet bay, ash, tulip tree, wild black cherry, willow, common hop tree, sassafras, and spicebush	They will nectar on more varieties of plants than any other butterfly species of swallowtails.

Giant Swallowtail *Papilio cresphontes*	Citrus, Prickly ash, Hercules' club, Common hop tree, Rue	Lantana, azalea, goldenrod, honeysuckle, coneflower, Joe Pye weed, milkweed, and mountain mint
Palamedes Swallowtail *Papilio palamedes*	Redbay, swamp bay, sassafras, and spicebush	Azalea, phlox, Joe Pye weed, Coneflower, liatris sp., milkweeds, and verbenas
Pipevine Swallowtail *Battus philenor*	Native Aristolochia sp. (pipevines) only. Non-native varieties are toxic to the caterpillars.	Thistles, phlox, Vernonia sp. (iron weeds), frostweed, cardinal flower, liatris sp., and lantana
Spicebush Swallowtail *Papilio troilus*	Spicebush, sassafras, red bay, camphor, sweet bay, and redbay	Joe Pye weed, Prickly ash, Hercules' club, honeysuckle, lantana, thistles, milkweed, azaleas, and sensitive briar
Zebra Swallowtail *Eurytides marcellus*	Asimina sp. (Pawpaws)	Short-tubed flowers such as blackberries, amsonia, milkweeds, verbena, mistflower, asters, boneset, buttonbush, redbud, and wild plum
Vesta Crescent *Phyciodes graphica*	Asters, Helianthus sp., Echinacea sp., and goldenrods	Flower nectar
Phaon Crescent *Phyciodes phaon*	Frogfruit	Frogfruit, verbenas, black-eyed Susans, goldenrod, liatris sp., asters, coneflower, lantana, and heliotrope
Pearl Crescent *Phyciodes tharos*	Asters	Mistflower, dogbane, milkweed, asters, and black-eyed Susans
American Painted Lady *Vanessa virginiensis*	Plantain, cudweeds, ironweed, helianthus sp. (sunflowers), and asters	Thistles, asters, clover, liatris sp., goldenrod, and coneflowers
Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*	Thistles, mallows, asters, and Fabaceae sp. (legumes)	Prefer flowers that are 3-6 feet high such as thistles, liatris sp., asters, Joe Pye weed, and Ironweed
Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*	Nettles	Mistflower, asters, and other composites. They also like bird poop, fermenting fruit, and tree sap.
Question Mark *Polygonia interrogationis*	Elms, Celtis sp. (hackberry), nettles	Prefer a puddling station with rotting fruit, dung, and carrion. Rarely milkweed and aster nectar.
Common Buckeye *Junonia coenia*	Plantain, frogfruit, toadflax, ruellia, and gerardia	Same as host plus composites, coneflowers, Joe Pye weed, vervain, and goldenrod.
Boardered Patch Chlosyne lacinia	Helianthus sp. (sunflowers), ragweed, verbenas, and blanket flowers	Sunflowers, daisies, milkweed, Joe Pye weed, phlox, and salvias
Tropical Checkered Skipper *Pyrgus oileus*	Mallows, sida	Small flowered composites, sida, frogfruit, and lantana
Silver-spotted Skipper *Epargyreus clarus*	Fabaceae family (legumes) such as false indigo, wisteria, pigeon wings, locust, hog peanuts, etc.	They prefer blue, red, purple, pink, and white flowers such as buttonbush, liatris sp., blue salvia, anise hyssop, & thistles,
Long-tailed Skipper *Urbanus proteus*	Fabaceae family (legumes), wisteria, and ticktrefoils	Flower nectar

White-striped Longtail *Chioides catillus*	Fabaceae family (legumes) such as tephrosia, sensitive briar, and snout beans	Flower nectar
Fiery Skipper *Hylephila phyleus*	Native grasses and turf grasses	Flower nectar
Clouded Skipper *Lerema accius*	Native grasses and turf grasses	Adults prefer pink, purple, or white flowers such as vervain, selfheal, buttonbush, & lantana
Southern Dogface *Zerene cesonia*	Fabaceae family (legumes) such as indigos, false indigo, alfalfa, soybeans, various clovers, vervain sp., and daleas	Alfalfa, coreopsis, verbena, and bluets
Cloudless Sulphur *Phoebis sennae*	Partridge pea and sennas	Mallows, lantana, Sennas, partridge peas and red flowers such as Turk's cap, cypress vine, red salvia, and cardinal flower.
Dainty Sulphur *Nathalis iole*	Bidens sp., chickweed, and greenthread	Low growing nectar plants like frogfruit, lazy daisies, violets, clover
Red-banded Hairstreak *Calycopis cecrops*	Rhus sp. (sumacs), Myrica sp. (Wax myrtle), Oaks	Mexican plum, wax myrtle, sumacs, oak trees
Gulf Fritillary *Agraulis vanillae*	Native passionflower (Passiflora incarnata or Passiflora lutea)	Passionflowers, mistflower, aster, lantana, thistle, black-eyed Susan, coreopsis, coneflower, salvias, and verbena
American Snout *Libytheana carinenta*	Celtis sp. (hackberry trees)	Milkweeds, goldenrods, sunflowers, asters, and others.

