

## Butterfly Host Plants: Giving Butterflies a Place to Call Home

Butterflies prefer to lay their eggs on certain plants; these are called host plants. They are the plants off of which caterpillars feed while they grow, and they may also supply a location at which the caterpillars can make their cocoons.

These host plants may acquire damage over time, so you should be ready for that. It can be surprising how often people plant these in order to attract butterflies with the purpose of laying eggs there, but then they're stunned when the caterpillars start eating the plants!

Caterpillars are neither large nor quick. They simply cannot travel a great distance in their search for food, so the parent butterflies will typically lay their eggs only on those plants where they know the young caterpillars will be able to survive, because the young caterpillars will probably not last long if the parents lay their eggs on the wrong kind of plant.

It may be disturbing at first that you willingly allow these "pests" to munch on the plants in your garden. If it bothers you to see plants with such holes in them, you may prefer to place your host plants somewhere that is a bit less visible.

When you place these host plants, you need to ensure that they are near to the plants in your garden which provide nectar. If they are set up too far away, then you probably will not have as many butterflies in your garden as otherwise. But now, let's take a brief look at some of the more popular butterflies, as well as which plants you would have to include as host plants in the event that you want to attract these particular butterflies to your garden.

Including these host plants isn't a solid guarantee that you'll have any of these specific butterflies in your garden, but it does certainly increase your chances! Monarch butterflies are among the most popular and recognized butterflies. They're the medium-sized orange and black butterflies, in case you don't know what they are. They will only lay their eggs on the milkweed, so if you want monarch butterflies visiting your garden, then you need to have milkweed available for them.

Probably everyone in the U.S. has seen a black swallowtail—they're those huge yellow and black butterflies. They are quite large and noticeable, and they will lay their eggs on parsley, carrots, dill, and fennel. You will see these in many vegetable and herb gardens.

White cabbage butterflies and European cabbage butterflies tend to lay their eggs on cruciferous vegetables. They particularly like cabbage, broccoli, mustard greens, and other such cruciferous vegetables from the mustard and cabbage families.

Eastern tiger swallowtails use sycamore and willow trees to lay their eggs. If you have any of these trees in your yard, then you may have caught a glimpse of their fat, green caterpillars. Another very popular butterfly is the painted lady. They look somewhat like the monarch butterfly, with their orange, black, and white colors. Painted ladies use plants like thistle, hollyhock, and sunflower to lay their eggs.

A very interesting butterfly is the spicebush swallowtail. It has caterpillars which are quite frightening in appearance, since they look like they have a large, scary face! Spice bushes and sassafras trees are attractive for them to lay their eggs on, so if you would like to have these wild little critters in your yard, then be sure to include some of these spicy trees!

## About the Author

Source: <http://diygardeningtips.com>