

Butterfly Plants and Mississippi Butterflies

Butterflies and their host plants are intricately tied to one another. Generally, there are two types of plants that you must have in your garden for butterflies. One type is a nectar plant; adult butterflies feed on these nectar plants. The second plant is a larval host plant; the immature stage (larva) feeds on this plant. When you plan a butterfly garden, you should plan for both types of plants. This publication lists both types of plants and some of the butterflies we can expect to see in Mississippi.

Many kinds of butterflies will visit the nectar plants, but you must be careful when choosing a larval host plant if you want to attract a particular species of butterfly. Also, remember the larval plants will be eaten, so plan accordingly when this occurs.

The importance of planting for butterflies is becoming clear. Changes in land use are thought to be responsible for the reduction in the number of species and the number of butterflies. This suggests an urgent need for more carefully planned butterfly gardens.

Selected Nectar Plants for Mississippi Butterfly Gardens

Angel's Trumpet – *Datura meteloides*
Bee Balm – *Monarda didyma*
Black-eyed Susan – *Rudbeckia* spp.
Butterfly Bush – *Buddleia davidii*
Cardinal Flower – *Lobelia cardinalis*
Cleome – *Cleome pungens*
Common Mallow – *Malva neglecta*
Coneflower – *Echinacea* spp.
Coreopsis – *Coreopsis* spp.
Cosmos – *Cosmos* spp.
Dame's Rocket – *Hesperis matronalis*
Dogwood – *Cornus florida*
Frikart Aster – *Aster* × *Frikartii*
Garden Phlox – *Phlox paniculata*
Gayfeathers – *Liatris* spp.
Glossy Abelia – *Abelia grandiflora*
Goldenrod – *Solidago* spp.
Gomphrena – *Gomphrena globosa*
Hardy Ageratum – *Conoclinium coelestinum*
Hibiscus – *Hibiscus* spp.
Hollyhock – *Alcea rosea*

Hollyhock Mallow – *Malva alcea*
Joe-Pye-Weed – *Eupatorium purpureum*
Lantana – *Lantana* spp.
Milkweed – *Asclepias* spp.
Musk Mallow – *Malva moschata*
Oxeye Daisy – *Leucanthemum vulgare*
Passion Flower – *Passiflora incarnata*
Pentas – *Pentas lanceolata*
Queen Anne's Lace – *Daucus carota*
Sages – *Salvia* spp.
Shasta Daisies – *Leucanthemum superbum*
Showy Sedum – *Sedum spectabile*
Spicebush – *Lindera benzoin*
Swamp Sunflower – *Helianthus angustifolius*
Sweet William – *Dianthus barbatus*
Verbena – *Verbena* spp.
Willow – *Salix* spp.
Yarrows – *Achillea* spp.
Zinnia – *Zinnia* spp.

Selected Larval Plants for Mississippi Butterfly Gardens

Anise Hyssop – *Agastache foeniculum*
Black Cherry – *Prunus serotina*
Common Mallow – *Malva neglecta*
Dill Weed – *Anethum graveolens*
Dogwood – *Cornus florida*
Dutchman's Pipe – *Aristolochia durior*
Fennel – *Foeniculum vulgare*
Frikart Aster – *Aster* × *Frikartii*
Hollyhock – *Alcea rosea*
Hollyhock Mallow – *Malva alcea*
Milkweed – *Asclepias* spp.
Mullein – *Verbascum* spp.
Nasturtium – *Nasturtium* spp.
New England Asters – *Aster novae-angliae*
Parsley – *Petroselinum crispum*
Passion Flower – *Passiflora incarnata*
Pawpaw – *Asimina triloba*
Queen Anne's Lace – *Daucus carota*
Rue – *Ruta graveolus*
Sassafras – *Sassafras albidum*
Spicebush – *Lindera benzoin*
Sweet Bay – *Magnolia virginiana*
Verbena – *Verbena* spp.
Willow – *Salix* spp.

Host plants ensure food sources for butterfly species. When the plants are available for both larvae and adults, they will come. Feeders, water, and mineral sources can provide additional incentives for butterflies to visit and remain in the garden area.

Common Butterflies Found in Mississippi

American painted lady – *Vanessa virginiensis*
Common buckeye – *Junonia coenia*
Eastern comma – *Polygonia comma*
Gulf fritillary – *Agraulis vanillae*
Hackberry emperor – *Asterocampa celtis*
Mourning cloak – *Nymphalis antiopa*
Painted lady – *Vanessa cardui*
Pearl crescent – *Phyciodes tharos*
Question mark – *Polygonia interrogationis*
Red admiral – *Vanessa atalanta*
Red-spotted purple – *Basilarchia astyanax*
Viceroy – *Basilarchia archippus*
Gray hairstreak – *Strymon melinus*
Spring azure – *Celastrina ladon*
Monarch – *Danaus plexippus*
Common wood nymph – *Ceryonis pegala*
Common checkered-skipper – *Pyrgus communis*

Silver-spotted skipper – *Epargyreus clarus*
Tawney-edged skipper – *Polites themistocles*
Black swallowtail – *Papilio polyxenes*
Giant swallowtail – *Papilio cresphontes*
Pipevine swallowtail – *Battus philenor*
Spicebush swallowtail – *Papilio troilus*
Eastern tiger swallowtail – *Papilio glaucus*
Zebra swallowtail – *Eurytides marcellus*
Cabbage white – *Pieris rapae*
Checkered white – *Pontia protodice*
Cloudless sulphur – *Phoebis sennae*
Common sulphur – *Colias philodice*
Southern dogface – *Zerene cesonia*
Falcate orangetip – *Anthocharis midea*
Orange sulphur – *Colias eurytheme*
Sleepy orange – *Eurema nicippe*
Eastern tailed-blue – *Everes comyntas*
American snout – *Libytheaana carineta*
Variegated fritillary – *Euptoieta claudia*
Fiery skipper – *Hylephila phyleus*

Resources

For more information on butterflies, visit:

- [Butterflies and Moths of North America](#)
- [North American Butterfly Association](#)

Publication 3857 (POD-08-24)

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