



# NORTH AMERICAN BUTTERFLY ASSOCIATION

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## SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN

by Craig Elston

with assistance from Elizabeth Tillman and Thonda Spink

### TOP BUTTERFLY NECTAR FLOWERS

A number in front of a flower name indicates a particularly recommended plant (1 = most recommended). Numbers in "BLOOM SEASON" correspond to the month (4 = April, 5 = May, etc.). Abbreviations: A = alien species, N = native species.

	FLOWER	HEIGHT	COLOR	BLOOM SEASON	ATTRACTED BUTTERFLIES	COMMENTS
A	Snapdragon <i>Antirrhinum majus</i>	1-3'	mixed	spring-fall		
N	Wild lupine <i>Lupinus perennis</i>	1'	purple	mid-May to early June		
A	Sweet William <i>Dianthus barbatus</i>	1'	mixed	late spring- early summer	Monarch and others	
N	Coreopsis <i>Coreopsis lanceolata</i>	1'	yellow	6-7		
N	Swamp milkweed <i>Asclepias incarnata</i>	3-5'	pink	6-7	Monarch and others	
N 2	Common milkweed <i>Asclepias syriaca</i>	3-5'	pink	6-8	Monarch and others	can be invasive
N	Butterfly milkweed <i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	1.5-2'	orange	6-8	Monarch and others	difficult to move; native sources hardier easy to grow
N	Black-eyed Susan <i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	1-2'	yellow	6-9	many	
A	Lemon thyme <i>Thymus x citriodora</i>	18"	pale lavender	summer		
A	Pincushion flower <i>Scabiosa</i>	1'	blue	summer	many	
N	Wild rose <i>Rosa</i>	3'	pink	summer	attracts dozens of butterflies at a time	fragrant
A	Blanketflower <i>Gaillardia x grandiflora</i>	3'	yellow & red	summer-fall		
A	Butterfly bush <i>Buddleia davidii</i>	10'	purple	summer-fall	Swallowtails, Monarch, and others	
A	Tropical milkweed <i>Asclepias curassavica</i>	3'	red- orange	summer-fall	Monarch and others	
A	Verbena <i>Verbena x hybrida</i>	18"	mixed	summer-fall		many varieties

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**SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN**

**TOP BUTTERFLY NECTAR FLOWERS**

(continued)

	<b>FLOWER</b>	<b>HEIGHT</b>	<b>COLOR</b>	<b>BLOOM SEASON</b>	<b>ATTRACTED BUTTERFLIES</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
A	Zinnia <i>Zinnia</i>	1.5-4'	mixed	summer-fall	Swallowtails, Monarch, and others	
A	Mauve catmint <i>Nepeta mussinii</i>	1'	violet-blue	long		invasive
N	Queen-of-the-prairie <i>Filipendula rubra</i>	3-5'	pink	7	Swallowtails	can be invasive
N	Wild bergamot <i>Monarda fistulosa</i>	3-5'	lavender	7-8	many	
N	Purple coneflower <i>Echinacea purpurea</i>	3-4'	purple	7-9		
N	Rosinweed <i>Silphium integrifolium</i>	5'	yellow	7-9	many	
N	Cup-plant <i>Silphium perfoliatum</i>	7-10'	yellow	7-10	Monarch and others	
N	Goldenrod <i>Solidago</i>	3-5'	yellow	7-10	many	some species invasive; others not
N	Stiff goldenrod <i>Solidago rigida</i>	3-5'	yellow	7-10	Monarch and others	non-invasive
N	Mountain mint <i>Pycnanthemum virginianum</i>	2'	white	midsummer to fall		somewhat invasive
A/N	Blazingstar <i>Liatris</i>	3-5'	pink	midsummer to fall	Black and Spicebush Swallowtails, Monarch	
N 1	Rough blazingstar <i>Liatris aspera</i>	3-4'	pink	midsummer to fall	Black and Spicebush Swallowtails, Monarch	
N 3	Ironweed <i>Vernonia gigantea</i>	4-6'	purple	8-10	Monarch and others	popular with Monarch
A/N	Aster <i>Aster</i>	varies	various	late summer-fall		
N	New England aster <i>Aster novae-angliae</i>	3-5'	purple	late summer-fall	Monarch and others	showy native aster
A	Cosmos <i>Cosmos bipinnatus</i>	5'	mixed	late summer-fall		
A	Sedum 'Autumn Joy' <i>Sedum 'Herbstfreude'</i>	2'	pink	fall	Monarch and others	

**NECTAR FLOWERS THAT DON'T WORK IN THIS REGION**

Abbreviations: A = alien species, N = native species.

<b>FLOWER</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
A Butterfly bush <i>Buddleia davidii</i>	Works in some gardens but not others, never in my gardens.

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**NECTAR FLOWERS THAT DON'T WORK IN THIS REGION**

(continued)

<b>FLOWER</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
A Heliotrope <i>Heliotrope arborescens</i>	Did not work in all three gardens
A Lantana <i>Lantana camara</i>	Did not work in two of three gardens
A Marigold <i>Tagetes erecta</i>	
A Orange cosmos <i>Cosmos sulphureus</i>	
A Petunia <i>Petunia x hybrida</i>	

**TOP CATERPILLAR FOOD PLANTS**

A number in front of a plant name indicates a particularly recommended plant (1 = most recommended). Abbreviations: A = alien species, N = native species.

<b>NAME</b>	<b>HEIGHT</b>	<b>BUTTERFLY CATERPILLARS</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
N Black cherry <i>Prunus serotina</i>	65'	Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Red-spotted Purple	
N Black willow <i>Salix nigra</i>	50'	Viceroy	
A Bronze fennel <i>Foeniculum vulgare dulce rubrum</i>	1.5-2'	Black Swallowtail	
N Butterfly milkweed <i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	1.5-2'	Monarch	native varieties better than horticultural varieties
A Carrot <i>Daucus sativus</i>	8-10"	Black Swallowtail	used more than wild carrot (Queen Anne's lace)
N 1 Common milkweed <i>Asclepias syriaca</i>	3-5'	Monarch	invasive in garden
A 3 Curled parsley <i>Petroselinum crispum</i>	8-10"	Black Swallowtail	
A Dill <i>Anethum graveolens</i>	3-5'	Black Swallowtail	
A Kale <i>Crambe maritima</i>	2.5'	Cabbage White	
A Milkweed 'Ice Ballat' <i>Asclepias 'Ice Ballat'</i>	3'	Monarch	
N 2 Pearly Everlasting <i>Anaphalis margaritacea</i>	2'	American Lady	horticultural varieties also work
N/A Plantain <i>Plantago</i>	6-10"	Common Buckeye	
N Pussytoes <i>Antennaria neglecta</i>	6"	American Lady	
N Sandbar willow <i>Salix interior</i>	20'	Viceroy	
N Sassafras <i>Sassafras albidum</i>	48'	Spicebush Swallowtail	colonial, spreads

**SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN**

**TOP CATERPILLAR FOOD PLANTS**

(continued)

	<b>NAME</b>	<b>HEIGHT</b>	<b>BUTTERFLY CATERPILLARS</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
A	Siberian elm <i>Ulmus pumila</i>	70'	Question Mark	
A	Silver licorice plant <i>Helichrysum petiolare</i>	20"	Painted Lady	use in hanging baskets
A	Snapdragon <i>Antirrhinum majus</i>	1-3'	Common Buckeye	
N	Stinging nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i>	3-4'	Red Admiral	plant causes skin irritation
N	Swamp milkweed <i>Asclepias incarnata</i>	3-5'	Monarch	can be used in moist garden
A	Tropical milkweed <i>Asclepias curassavica</i>	3'	Monarch	
N	Tuliptree <i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>	100'	Eastern Tiger Swallowtail	landscape specimens won't become too large too quickly
N	Violets <i>Viola</i>	6"	Fritillaries	many violet species suitable
N	Wild lupine <i>Lupinus perennis</i>	1'	Eastern Tailed-Blue	

**COMMON BUTTERFLIES FOR YOUR GARDEN & YARD**

A number in front of a butterfly name indicates a particularly likely species (1 = most expected to be seen). Numbers in "FLIGHT PERIOD" and "CATERPILLAR SEASON" correspond to the month (4 = April, 5 = May, etc.), with < meaning earlier in the month, m the middle of the month, and > late in the month.

	<b>NAME</b>	<b>FLIGHT PERIOD</b>	<b>CATERPILLAR SEASON</b>	<b>CATERPILLAR FOOD PLANTS</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
	Black Swallowtail <i>Papilio polyxenes</i>	4-9	5-9	wild/cultivated carrot	cultivated more than wild carrot
	Giant Swallowtail <i>Papilio cresphontes</i>	4-10	5-9	prickly ash, wafer ash	
	Eastern Tiger Swallowtail <i>Papilio glaucus</i>	5-10	5-10	black cherry, tuliptree	
2	Spicebush Swallowtail <i>Papilio troilus</i>	5-9	5-9	sassafras	
	Cabbage White <i>Pieris rapae</i>	3-11	4-11	cabbage, kale, radish	
	American Copper <i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>	m4-10	4-10	sheep sorrel	
	Great Spangled Fritillary <i>Speyeria cybele</i>	6-9	6-9	violets	

**SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN**

**COMMON BUTTERFLIES FOR YOUR GARDEN & YARD**

(continued)

NAME	FLIGHT PERIOD	CATERPILLAR SEASON	CATERPILLAR FOOD PLANTS	COMMENTS
Pearl Crescent <i>Phyciodes tharos</i>	m5-10	5-10	asters	
Question Mark <i>Polygonia interrogationis</i>	m4-10	5-10	Siberian elm	
Mourning Cloak <i>Nymphalis antiopa</i>	3-9	4-10	elm, willow	
American Lady <i>Vanessa virginiensis</i>	5-10	5-10	licorice vine, pearly everlasting, pussytoes	
3 Red Admiral <i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	m4-10	>4-10	nettle	
Red-spotted Purple <i>Limenitis arthemis</i>	5-9	5-9	black cherry	
Viceroy <i>Limenitis archippus</i>	>5-10	>5-10	willow	
1 Monarch <i>Danaus plexippus</i>	5-10	6-9	milkweeds	
Silver-spotted Skipper <i>Epargyreus clarus</i>	m5-9	5-9	locust, other members of pea family	

**LOCAL & UNUSUAL BUTTERFLIES FOR YOUR GARDEN & YARD**

Numbers in "FLIGHT PERIOD" and "CATERPILLAR SEASON" correspond to the month (4 = April, 5 = May, etc.), with < meaning earlier in the month, m the middle of the month, and > late in the month.

NAME	FLIGHT PERIOD	CATERPILLAR SEASON	CATERPILLAR FOOD PLANTS	COMMENTS
Gray Hairstreak <i>Strymon melinus</i>	m4-10	5-10	green bean	
Common Buckeye <i>Junonia coenia</i>	6-10	6-10	plantain, snapdragon	

**GENERAL COMMENTS ABOUT GARDENING IN THIS REGION**

**USDA ZONE: 5-6**

West Michigan has a wide range of soil types and moisture conditions ranging from pure sand to heavy deep clay, and very dry to many wetlands. We often have cold winters with much snow and summers can be warm and dry or wet. Native plants and natural-type gardens work the best to attract butterflies. In my own yard, the 3500 square foot prairie garden with native species attracts 80-90% of the butterflies observed. My advice for a garden design is simply to use native plants and keep it as natural as possible. Many times, the native species work better in attracting butterflies and are much hardier than their horticultural counterparts. Many of the native prairie species may take several years to establish, but are well worth the wait.