



NORTH AMERICAN BUTTERFLY ASSOCIATION

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CENTRAL TENNESSEE BASIN

by Rita Venable

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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
N Spring beauty <i>Claytonia</i>	4-12"	pink, white	3-5	Falcate Orangetip	rich woodland soil
N Toothwort <i>Dentaria</i>	8-16"	white	3-5	West Virginia White Falcate Orangetip	wooded shade
N Rose verbena <i>Verbena canadensis</i>	0-24"	deep pink, purple	3-9	many	needs dry, rocky soil
N Redbud tree <i>Cercis canadensis</i>	20-35'	pink	4-5	Hairstreaks, Duskywings	prefers moist, but tolerates dry
N Locust tree <i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>	50-75'	white	4-6	Silver-spotted Skipper	upland, dry
1 N Native honeysuckle <i>Lonicera sempervirens</i> vine	10-20'	bright scarlet	4-9	many	use only native species; exotics highly invasive
A Alyssum <i>Lobularia maritima</i>	8-12"	white	4-11	Skippers	good border plant
A Marigold <i>Tagetes</i>	10-24"	yellow, gold	4-11	Skippers	adaptable, full sun
1 Milkweed <i>Asclepias</i>	2-7'	pink, white, orange, purple	5-9	many	4 genera, 19 native species
A Heal-all <i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	4-10"	pink	5-10	Skippers	common
A Impatiens <i>Impatiens</i>	1-2'	red	5-10	Cloudless Sulphur	needs moist shade
A Dahlia <i>Dahlia</i>	varies	various	5-11	Duskywings	plant in spring
1 A Dwarf zinnia <i>Zinnia</i>	18"	various	5-11	many	dwarf has long growing season
1 A Lantana <i>Lantana</i>	0-3'	many	5-11	many	does not over-winter

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TOP BUTTERFLY NECTAR FLOWERS

(continued)

	FLOWER	HEIGHT	COLOR	BLOOM SEASON	ATTRACTED BUTTERFLIES	COMMENTS
A	Shasta daisy <i>Chrysanthemum maximum</i>	1-3'	white	6-7	Sulphurs, American Snout,	foliage is evergreen
N	Buttonbush <i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>	3-10'	white	6-8	Swallowtails, Ladies	needs low, wet areas
N	Bee balm <i>Monarda</i>	1-5'	white, pink, red	6-9	many	7 native species; white powdery mildew on leaves
N	Coreopsis <i>Coreopsis</i>	3-10'	yellow	6-9	many	8 native species
N	Swamp rose mallow <i>Hibiscus moscheutos</i>	4-7'	white	6-9	several	needs wet, sunny spot
1 A	Mexican sunflower <i>Tithonia rotundifolia</i>	5-6'	orange	6-10	Sulphurs, Ladies, Monarch, Skippers	grows well from seed; tall and short varieties
1 N/A	Purple coneflower <i>Echinacea purpurea</i>	2-6'	pink	6-10	many	easy to grow from seed
A	Gaura <i>Gaura</i>	2-3'	pink/white	6-11	several	long roots; four native species
A	Nemesia <i>Nemesia</i>	12-18"	various	6-11	many	fragrant; needs moist soil
1 N	Blazing star <i>Liatris</i>	8"-5'	purple	7-9	many	7 native species
N	Cardinal flower <i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>	2-6'	red	7-9	Sulphurs	needs wet soil
1 N	Joe-pye-weed <i>Eupatorium</i>	2-10'	pink	7-9	Swallowtails	3 native species
N	Pickereel-weed <i>Pontederia cordata</i>	2'	violet-blue	7-9	several	shallow water, full sun
N	Mistflower <i>Conoclinium coelestinum</i>	1-3'	blue	7-10	many	adaptable
N	Great blue lobelia <i>Lobelia siphilitica</i>	2-5'	purple	8-9	several	beautiful fall color
N	New England aster <i>Aster novae-angliae</i>	3-5'	purple	8-10	various	likes moist to wet soil
A	Lavendar <i>Lavandula</i>	varies	purple	varies	many	many aromatic cultivars
1 N	Phlox <i>Phlox</i>	1-4'	pink, blue, white	varies	Hairstreaks	11 species native to Tennessee
A	Sages <i>Salvia</i>	varies	various	varies	many	many selections

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NECTAR FLOWERS THAT DON'T WORK IN THIS REGION

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

FLOWER	COMMENTS
A Bush honeysuckle <i>Lonicera morrowii</i>	invasive (severe threat)
A Bush honeysuckle <i>Lonicera maackii</i>	invasive (severe threat)
N Carolina jessamine <i>Gelsemium sempervirens</i>	seldom visited
A Daylily <i>Hemerocallis</i>	seldom visited
N Flowering dogwood <i>Cornus florida</i>	seldom visited
A Geranium <i>Pelargonium</i>	seldom visited
A Mimosa <i>Albizia julibrissin</i>	invasive
A Pansy <i>Viola</i>	seldom visited
A Periwinkle <i>Vinca minor</i>	invasive (significant threat)
A Petunia <i>Petunia</i>	rarely visited
A Privet <i>Ligustrum</i>	invasive
A Purple loosestrife <i>Lythrum salicaria</i>	invasive
A Yellow iris <i>Iris pseudocorus</i>	seldom visited

TOP CATERPILLAR FOOD PLANTS

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

NAME	HEIGHT	BUTTERFLY CATERPILLARS	COMMENTS
A Canna (red) <i>Canna generalis</i>	6'	Brazilian Skipper	easy to grow from bulbs
N Cherry tree <i>Prunus serotina</i>	75'	Eastern Tiger Swallowtail	good tree for wildlife
N Elm trees <i>Ulmus</i> species, including <i>alata</i> (40-50') but not <i>americana</i>	varies	Question Mark	shade and drought tolerant
A English plantain <i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	10"	Common Buckeye	likes moist areas
N Milkweeds <i>Asclepias</i>	varies	Monarch	13 native species
N Passionvine <i>Passiflora incarnata</i>	vine	Gulf and Variegated Fritillaries	easy to obtain and grow
A Parsley, dill, fennel Apiaceae family	<3'	Black Swallowtail	wide variety of choices
N Pussy toes <i>Antennaria plantaginifolia</i>	0-8"	American Lady	dry shade; allelopathic
A Clovers <i>Trifolium</i>	8-20"	Clouded Sulphur	red clover is good for nectaring also

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TOP CATERPILLAR FOOD PLANTS

(continued)

NAME	HEIGHT	BUTTERFLY CATERPILLARS	COMMENTS
A Rue <i>Ruta graveolens</i>	2'	Giant and Black Swallowtails	sun, moist well-drained soil
N Smooth rock cress <i>Arabis laevigata</i>	to 40"	Falcate Orangetip	spring only
N Spicebush <i>Lindera benzoin</i>	6-12'	Spicebush Swallowtail	dappled shade/part sun; also good food source for migratory birds
N Toothwort <i>Dentaria</i>	8-16"	West Virginia White	shade, spring only
N Violets <i>Viola</i>	4-6"	Variegated Fritillary	cool shade

COMMON 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
Black Swallowtail <i>Papilio polyxenes</i>	4-10	7-9	dill, fennel, parsley, rue	
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail <i>Papilio glaucus</i>	4-9	8-9	cherry trees	
Cabbage White <i>Pieris rapae</i>	3-11	7-8	cabbage, collards, Brussels sprouts	
Orange Sulphur <i>Colias eurytheme</i>	3-10		clovers	
Cloudless Sulphur <i>Phoebis sennae</i>	4-10	8-9	partridge pea, senna	
Eastern Tailed-Blue <i>Everes comyntas</i>	4-10		pea family	
American Snout <i>Libytheana carinenta</i>	4-9	7-8	hackberry trees	
Gulf Fritillary <i>Agraulis vanillae</i>	7-11	7-10	passionvine	
Variegated Fritillary <i>Euptoieta claudia</i>	4-10	6-8	violets, passionvine	
Pearl Crescent <i>Phyciodes tharos</i>	4-10		asters	
American Lady <i>Vanessa virginiensis</i>	4-11		pussy toes, pearly everlastings	
Painted Lady <i>Vanessa cardui</i>	4-11		thistles	
Common Buckeye <i>Junonia coenia</i>	4-11		plantains	

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COMMON BUTTERFLIES FOR YOUR GARDEN & YARD

(continued)

NAME	FLIGHT PERIOD	CATERPILLAR SEASON	CATERPILLAR FOOD PLANTS	COMMENTS
Hackberry Emperor <i>Asterocampa celtis</i>	4-9		hackberry trees	
Carolina Satyr <i>Hermeuptychia sosybius</i>	4-10		grasses	
Monarch <i>Danaus plexippus</i>	6-10	8-9	milkweeds	caterpillars may 1st appear in Apr-May
Silver-spotted Skipper <i>Epargyreus clarus</i>	4-10		legumes, especially black locust	
Sachem <i>Atalopedes campestris</i>			grasses	

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
Pipevine Swallowtail <i>Battus philenor</i>	4-9		pipevine	
Zebra Swallowtail <i>Eurytides marcellus</i>	4-8		pawpaw trees	
Giant Swallowtail <i>Papilio cresphontes</i>	5-9	6-9		
Spicebush Swallowtail <i>Papilio troilus</i>	4-9	6-8	spicebush, sassafras	
Red-banded Hairstreak <i>Calycopis cecrops</i>			sumac detritus	
Great Spangled Fritillary <i>Speyeria cybele</i>			violets	
Red Admiral <i>Vanessa atalanta</i>			nettles	
Viceroy <i>Limenitis archippus</i>			willows	

GENERAL COMMENTS ABOUT GARDENING IN THIS REGION

USDA ZONE: 6

People living in the Central Basin of Middle Tennessee, where there are four distinct seasons, still experience fluctuations in climate that cause them to protect their plants from frost in May and allows them to observe anglewings on sunny, 70° days in January. Temperatures may range from below zero in the winter to over 100° in summer, with the average being about 58-60°. Average annual humidity is 70%, which can cause stress to both garden and gardener in the summer. The greatest amount of precipitation usually falls in late winter and early spring (48-52" per year) and most of the weather systems come in from the West. The frost periods are roughly October 15 to April 15, with an

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average growing season of about 198 days.

The Central Basin terrain may be level to gently rolling to hilly. Most soils are derived from the limestone underneath the surface. Some local soils have lost phosphorus, iron or calcium, and may need supplements. Soil depth may range from a few inches in the endemic cedar glades to several feet near rivers. In these areas, soil pH can vary from slightly acid to slightly alkaline.

Successful butterfly gardening in the Central Basin is based upon how well the gardener can seek and find the right plants for their local habitat, which may vary greatly. There are many native Tennessee plants which are especially suited to withstand our climate, and these should be sought first when planning the butterfly garden. Please consult the invasive plant list before planting anything. The website is at <http://www.se-eppc.org/states/TN/TNIList.html>.

Butterfly bush (*Buddleia davidii*) is a good nectaring plant, but is not recommended because it has been designated on Watch List A by the Tennessee Exotic Pest Plant Council (see <http://www.se-eppc.org>). This designation means that the plant may naturalize and may become a problem in the future. The plant could "escape" to our natural areas-- parks, wildlife management areas or private lands which could cause major problems for wildlife, people, and native plants.

Instead of butterfly bush, try one of our native honeysuckles (*Diervilla*), chaste tree (*Vitex*), glossy abelia (*Abelia*), false indigo (*Amorpha*), or lantana (*Lantana*), which is an annual in Tennessee.

Along with common plantain (*Plantago major*), you will probably have English plantain in your yard. It is considered undesirable by some (for its appearance), but is still the hostplant for the beautiful Common Buckeye.