



# NORTH AMERICAN BUTTERFLY ASSOCIATION

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## EASTERN MASSACHUSETTS

by Brian Cassie

### TOP BUTTERFLY NECTAR FLOWERS (OBSERVED IN NATURE)

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	Lowbush blueberry <i>Vaccinium angustifolium</i>	1-2'	white	4-5	Elfins, Spring Azure, Duskywings	
N	Common blackberry <i>Rubus alleghaniensis</i>	2-3'	white	6	Lycaenids (Gossamer Wings) Nymphalids (Brush foots) Skippers	
A	Common hawkweed <i>Hieracium vulgatum</i>	1-3'	yellow	6	Nymphalids (Brush foots) Skippers	
N	Gray dogwood <i>Cornus racemosa</i>	5-10'	white	6	Nymphalids (Brush foots) Skippers	
A	Ox-eye daisy <i>Chrysanthemum leucanthemum</i>	1-2'	white	6-7	All	
A	Red clover <i>Trifolium pratense</i>	6-12"	purple	6-10	All	
A	Canada thistle <i>Cirsium arvense</i>	1-3'	pink	7	All but Swallowtails	invasive and weedy
A	Brown knapweed <i>Centaurea jacea</i>	1-3'	rose-purple	7	Whites, Sulphurs, Skippers, Nymphalids (Brush foots)	
N	Narrow-leaved mtn mint <i>Pycnanthemum tenuifolium</i>	1-2'	white	7	Hairstreaks Skippers	
N	Smooth sumac <i>Rhus glabra</i>	5-10'	white	7	All	
N	Swamp milkweed <i>Asclepias incarnata</i>	2-6'	pink	7	Hairstreaks, Fritillaries, marsh skippers	
N	Wild Indigo <i>Baptisia tinctoria</i>	1-3'	yellow	7	Lycaenids (Gossamer Wings) Skippers	
N	Black-eyed Susan <i>Rudbeckia serotina</i>	1-3'	yellow	7-8	All but Swallowtails	
N	Butterfly milkweed <i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	1-2'	orange	7-8	All	
N	Buttonbush <i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>	3-10'	white	7-8	Nymphalids (Brush foots) Skippers	

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**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	Catnip <i>Nepeta cataria</i>	1-3'	white,lilac	7-8	Skippers	
N	Common milkweed <i>Asclepias syriaca</i>	3-6'	pink	7-8	All	
N	Meadowsweet <i>Spiraea latifolia</i>	2-6'	white	7-8	Hairstreaks	
N	New Jersey tea <i>Ceanothus americanus</i>	2-4'	white	7-8	Lycaenids (Gossamer Wings) Nymphalids (Brush foots)	
N	Pickeralweed <i>Pontederia cordata</i>	1-3'	blue-violet	7-8	Skippers	
A	Queen Anne's lace <i>Daucus carota</i>	1-3'	white	7-8	All but skippers	
N	Spotted knapweed <i>Centaurea maculosa</i>	1-3'	pink	7-8	Whites, Sulphurs, Skippers, Nymphalids (Brush foots)	very invasive and weedy
A	Purple loosestrife <i>Lythrum salicaria</i>	3-6'	purple	7-9	All	very invasive; may be banned in your area
N	Common boneset <i>Eupatorium perfoliatum</i>	2-5'	white	8-9	All	
N	Spotted joe-pye-weed <i>Eupatorium maculatum</i>	3-8'	pink	8-9	All, especially Fritillaries, Leonard's Skipper	
N	Lance-leaved goldenrod <i>Solidago graminifolia</i>	2-4'	yellow	8-9	Nymphalids (Brush foots) Skippers	
N	Asters <i>Aster</i>	1-6'	white,purple	8-10	Whites, Sulphurs, Monarch	

**NECTAR FLOWERS THAT DON'T WORK IN THIS REGION  
(OBSERVED IN NATURE)**

Many of these species occur in huge populations in meadows and old fields and usually not a butterfly is seen on a single blossom. Some of the flowers are tiny while other species are large and conspicuous. Abbreviations: A = alien species, N = native species.

**FLOWER**

- N Common blue-eyed grass *Sisynrinchium montanum*
- A Hop clover *Trifolium agrarium*
- A Common chickweed *Stellaria media*
- N Bluets *Houstonia caerulea*
- N Blue toadflax *Linaria canadensis*

## EASTERN MASSACHUSETTS

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

(continued)

#### FLOWER

- N Bedstraws *Galium*  
A/N Bindweeds *Convolvulus*  
N Birdfoot violet *Viola pedata*  
A Butter and eggs *Linaria vulgaris*  
Campion  
Common elder  
N Common evening primrose *Oenothera biennis*  
A Common mullein *Veronicastrum virginicum*  
A Common nightshade *Solanum nigrum*  
A Common St. Johnswort *Hypericum perforatum*  
N Common speedwell *Veronica officinalis*  
A Daisy fleabane *Erigeron annuus*  
N Dwarf cinquefoil *Potentilla canadensis*  
A Field pennycress *Thlaspi arvense*  
A Flax *Linum usitatissimum*  
A Hedge mustard *Sisymbrium officinale*  
A Lesser stitchwort *Stellaria graminea*  
A Multiflora rose *Rosa multiflora*  
N Steeplebush *Spiraea tomentosa*  
N Whorled loosestrife *Lysimachia quadrifolia*

### 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.

	NAME	HEIGHT	BUTTERFLY CATERPILLARS	COMMENTS
N	American elm <i>Ulmus americana</i>	80-100'	Question Mark Eastern Comma	
A/N	Artemisias <i>Artemisia</i>	6-24"	American Lady Painted Lady	Caterpillar "nests" are usually easy to find.
A	Aspens <i>Populus</i>	10-30'	Red-spotted Purple	Telltale caterpillar sign: mid-rib remains after remainder of leaf eaten.
A	Cabbages <i>Brassica</i>	1'	Cabbage White	
A	Carrot <i>Daucus carota</i>	6-12"	Black Swallowtail	
A	English plantain <i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	1'	Baltimore Checkerspot	Caterpillars in web late summer; still colonial in spring

**EASTERN MASSACHUSETTS**

**TOP CATERPILLAR FOOD PLANTS**

(continued)

	<b>NAME</b>	<b>HEIGHT</b>	<b>BUTTERFLY CATERPILLARS</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
N	Locusts <i>Gleditsia &amp; Robinia</i>	20-50'	Silver-spotted Skipper	Watch for telltale caterpillar shelters.
N	Milkweeds <i>Asclepias</i>	1-4'	Monarch	See "FLOWERS" above
A	Parsley <i>Petroselinum hortense</i>	6-12"	Black Swallowtail	
N	Sassafras <i>Sassafras albidum</i>	10-50'	Spicebush Swallowtail	Caterpillars live in leaves folded in half
A	Stinging nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i>	2-4'	Eastern Comma Red Admiral	Watch for leaves woven together into a "nest."
N	Willows <i>Salix</i>	5-30'	Mourning Cloak Viceroy	

**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 FOOD PLANTS</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail <i>Papilio glaucus</i>	6-9	lilac	
Cabbage White <i>Pieris rapae</i>	4-9	cabbages	daily visitor to the garden spring-fall
American Copper <i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>	5-9	sheep sorrel	
Great Spangled Fritillary <i>Speyeria cybele</i>	7-9	violets	
Monarch <i>Danaus plexippus</i>	6-10	milkweeds	
Silver-spotted Skipper <i>Epargyreus clarus</i>	6-8	locusts	
Peck's Skipper <i>Polites peckius</i>	6,8	grasses	
Hobomok Skipper <i>Poanes hobomok</i>	6	grasses	
Dun Skipper <i>Euphyes vestris</i>	7-8	grasses	

## EASTERN MASSACHUSETTS

### 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.

<b>FLIGHT NAME</b>	<b>CATERPILLAR PERIOD</b>	<b>CATERPILLAR SEASON</b>	<b>FOOD PLANTS</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
Harvester <i>Feniseca tarquinius</i>	5-10	5-10	aphids on alders	easiest to find as caterpillar
Olive Hairstreak <i>Callophrys gryneus (gryneus)</i>	5-6,8		Eastern red cedar	
Painted Lady <i>Vanessa cardui</i>	5-10	5-9	Many species; garden varieties include artemisia, hollyhock, perennial bachelor buttons	low number in this area most years

### GENERAL COMMENTS ABOUT GARDENING IN THIS REGION

#### USDA ZONE: 6

(5 in central Massachusetts)

Butterfly gardens in May, September, October, and November often (should) have a lot more variety of nectaring sources than butterflies can find in the wild. These can be the most satisfying months to have a butterfly garden, even though the number of butterfly species will be greater June to August. Three of the four Massachusetts state records for Long-tailed Skipper (*Urbanus proteus*) have come from suburban gardens, proving the value of these places for finding unusual butterfly observations. In late fall in this region, garden chrysanthemums attract whatever butterflies are still flying. Many late October and November butterfly records are from gardens.

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