

Trivia

I have an old newspaper clipping (from someone else-who knows where) that says the word *butterfly* comes from the Dutch word *botervlieg*, meaning “butter poop” named from the greasy yellow residue of their pollen rich diet. Like I said, I can’t confirm or deny this.

As for the migration, Dale Clark pointed out to us one time that to migrate you pass to one area and then return to the original area. He said most emigrate where they pass from one area to the next but don’t return, except for butterflies like Monarchs where their offspring are returning to the wintering sites. He said emigration is often food-driven when there are a huge number of butterflies in one area and they start spreading out to find other larval host plants.

Butterfly Feeding Habits

A few butterflies such as the Zebra Longwing which sometimes shows up in this area (north Texas) in later summer months, will also feed on pollen from plants and this may be why they live for several months at a time as adults unlike many butterflies that may last only weeks as adults. A lot of people don’t realize that butterflies will feed from all kinds of things to get minerals for egg laying. You can find them on feces, animal carcasses, urine soaked soil, and sweaty peoples’ skin. Fruit set out for them has to be fermented as they won’t come to fresh fruit, but it can also get too fermented and has to be replaced regularly. Bananas, Watermelon and Papaya were their favorites here. Bait can also be prepared with fermented orange juice and whiskey or beer painted on trees- it’s a known way to attract moths and then you can go back at night to check the tree with a headlamp.

One problem with a sugar solution is that sugar bait is that bacteria can show up and the solution may need to be cleaned out regularly if put in a dish.

Host and Feeder Plants

Here are a few of the larger host and feeder plants and what we’ve had luck attracting them to for caterpillars. Some trees were kept in large pots.

Fennel, Dill, Parsley, Rue- Black Swallowtails

Rue, Citrus (some plants- we had good luck with are grapefruit and blood orange trees),

Hop Ash, Prickly Ash- Giant Swallowtail

Ash, Tulip Tree- Tiger Swallowtail

Pipevine (Woolly and White-veined- NOT the large tropical type from stores- the toxins are too strong for local swallowtails)- Pipevine Swallowtails

Cabbage- Cabbage Butterfly

Alfalfa, White and Yellow Sweet Clover- Orange Sulphurs

Senna (Argentine Senna works well but there are some natives also)- Giant Cloudless

Sulphur (eating yellow flowers= yellow caterpillar, green leaves= green)

Frogfruit (good groundcover but may take over), Plantain- Buckeye

Nettle and False Nettle- Red Admiral

Elm and Hackberry Trees, Hops, Nettles- Questionmark

Willows, Elm and Hackberry Trees- Mourning Cloak

Hackberry Trees- Hackberry and Tawny Emperors, also Snout Butterflies

Milkweed of all kinds (there is also some sort of vine they will feed on with Milkweed type seedpods) - Monarch and Queen

Willows- Viceroy

Passionvine (several kinds including May Pop and Evergreen varieties, native species also but it doesn’t have as many leaves)- Zebra Longwing Butterfly, Gulf and Variegated Fritillaries (also Violets and Violas for this one)

Wisteria- Silver-spotted Skipper

Thistles (the kind with the large pink flower heads) and members of the Mallow Family-
Painted Lady

Not as much experience with growing these caterpillars: book says **Cudweed or
Everlasting and Pussytoes, Rabbit-tobacco and related composites-** American Lady

Nectar Plants: tall-bushes /trees, medium- bushes/plants, short-low growing, vines

Vitex

Texas Kidneywood

Button Bush

Butterfly Bush (Black Knight especially)

Abelia

Mexican Milkweed

Penta (tall variety)

Mistflower

Phlox

Lantana (deep orange with gold center type especially)

Asters

Turks Cap

Stick Verbena- Vervain

Purple Coneflower

There is a good bush with grayish green leaves and pink flowers a salvia maybe but can't remember.

Flameweed, Flame flower, Flamesomething? (tall, orange flowers, purple berry clusters) good for pollen
for Longwings

Lantana- (low golden variety)

Scabiosa- Pincushion Flower (lavender or pink- evergreen)

Frogfruit

Mexican Flame Vine (excellent in fall for Monarchs if flowering)

A good mix of nectar and host plants will attract and keep them there once they find them. **Plant in clusters.** Golds and Purples seem to work well together for some reason. They used to say reds but they often seem to be more for hummingbirds when it comes to feeding.

Most salvias and red flowering plants (red yucca, coral honeysuckle, etc.) will attract more hummingbirds than anything.

Most white/pale plants are more for moths and aren't color driven but scent attracting for at night when it is dark. (Star Jasmine)

Both groups can be cool to attract though have their own lists of attractants and requirements.

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