

# How to Create Butterfly Habitat in Your New Jersey Outdoor Space

Want to invite butterflies to live with you year round? Give them a four season home - butterfly habitat! Habitat is the natural home of all wildlife and provides everything they need to live out their life cycles from generation to generation.

A butterfly's lifecycle includes egg, caterpillar, chrysalis and adult butterfly. Here's how to provide support at every stage of life and create butterfly habitat in your NJ outdoor space...

## 1. PROVIDE NECTAR PLANTS

Nectar is the sugary fluid made by flowers to attract pollinators. In addition to sugar and water, nectar provides butterflies with nutrients such as amino acids, proteins, enzymes, and vitamins. Choose nectar plants with different bloom times so that when one plant species stops blooming another begins, and **always** choose species that are native to New Jersey! Also, butterflies generally feed only in the sun, so pick the sunniest spot in your garden to grow your nectar plants.





## 2. PROVIDE A “PUDDLING STATION”

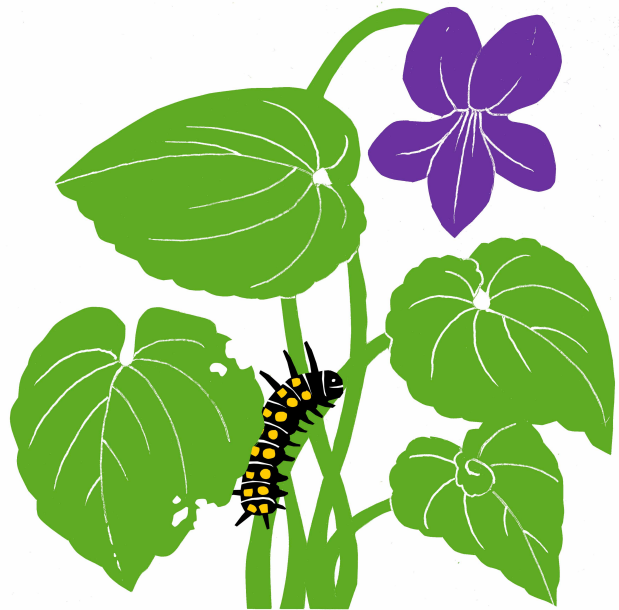
If you have puddles or moist dirt and/or sand in a sheltered area close to your nectar plants, then you already have a water source for butterflies - a “puddling station”. If not, a shallow dish of water with stones for resting spots can be used as an alternative.

## 3. PROVIDE HOST PLANTS

The plants that caterpillars eat are called “host plants”. Each species of butterflies has specific host plants on which the adult butterflies lay their eggs.

The butterflies are particular about where they lay their eggs because once hatched, the caterpillars will only eat their host plant, nothing else. Without access to their host plant, caterpillars would die.

Some of the best “host plants” are native trees and shrubs. Some host a huge variety of butterfly species, and all trees and shrubs can double as shelter.



Native violets serve as the host plant for the Great spangled fritillary.



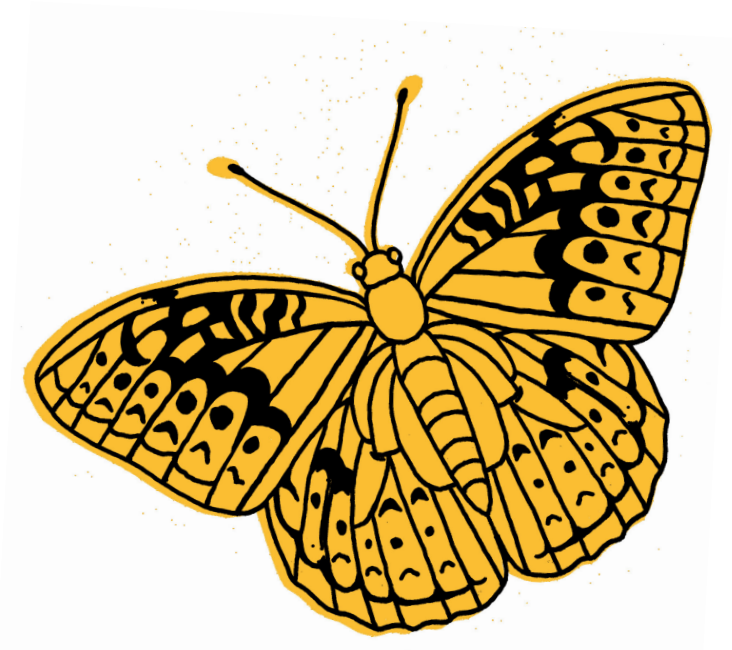
#### 4. LEAVE THE LEAVES

“Leaf litter” (fallen leaves and other dead plant material) are home to butterfly larvae (caterpillar) and pupae (chrysalis). It shelters them throughout the winter, and in spring they emerge to complete their life cycles.

So rather than tidying your garden and disposing of next spring’s butterflies, leave the dead plants standing and rake your fallen leaves into the garden beds. In spring, leave the leaves where they are and save yourself the time and expense of mulching.

#### 5. DO NOT USE PESTICIDES

You’ve provided everything that butterflies need to thrive in your garden - 1. nectar plants, 2. puddling station, 3. host plants and 4. leaf litter. Now all you need to do is protect them from harm - 5. DO NOT use pesticides or buy plants that have systemic pesticides!



## Resources

Now that you know how to create butterfly habitat, here are some resources to help you make it happen!

### HOW TO FIND THE PLANT SPECIES NATIVE TO YOUR REGION

The [Native Plant Finder](#) website allows you to enter your zip code and search for plants that are native to your specific geographic area. It will also tell you how many and which species of butterflies each plant is host to. You can also search based on which butterflies you want to invite to your garden and it will tell you it's host plants.

### WHERE TO BUY NATIVE PLANTS

The nurseries listed below carry plants that are native to New Jersey and the surrounding areas. Nurseries that carry a mix of native and non-native plants usually display them that way - mixed together - which makes it difficult (especially for the beginner) to know which plants are native. In addition, definitions of "native plants" can vary widely. A plant defined as "native" may be native to anywhere; if it evolved alongside the butterfly species of California, it won't be helpful to the butterfly species of New Jersey.



[Toadshade Wildflower Farm](#)  
Frenchtown, N.J.

[Wild Ridge Plants](#)  
Pohatcong, NJ

[Edge of Woods Native Plant Nursery](#)  
Fogelsville, PA

[Pinelands Nursery and Supply](#)  
Columbus, NJ

[D&R Greenway Land Trust](#)  
Princeton, NJ

[Wild Gardens Nursery](#)  
Cortlandt Manor, NY

[Grow Your Own From Seed!](#)  
(get free seeds - see below)

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## BUTTERFLY CATERPILLAR PLANTS FOR NEW JERSEY GARDENS

(Butterfly species most likely to visit gardens are shown in **boldface**)

NATIVE HOSTPLANTS		
Common Name	Scientific Name	Butterfly Species
Violets	<i>Viola</i> spp.	<b>Great Spangled Fritillary</b> , Meadow Fritillary
Milkweeds	<i>Asclepias</i> spp. (Common, Swamp, Butterfly)	<b>Monarch</b>
Turtlehead	<i>Chelone glabra</i>	Baltimore Checkerspot
Pussytoes	<i>Antennaria</i> spp.	<b>American Lady</b>
Sweet Everlasting	<i>Pseudognaphalium obtusifolium</i>	<b>American Lady</b>
False Nettle	<i>Boehmeria cylindrica</i>	<b>Red Admiral, Question Mark, Eastern Comma</b>
Asters	<i>Aster</i> (aka <i>Symphotrichum</i> , <i>Eurybia</i> )	<b>Pearl Crescent</b>
Golden Alexanders	<i>Zizia aurea</i> (most other native Carrot Family genera also used)	<b>Black Swallowtail</b>
<b>Pea Family:</b>	Many species used	<b>Gray Hairstreak, Eastern Tailed-Blue</b>
Showy Tick-Trefoil	<i>Desmodium canadense</i>	<b>Silver-spotted Skipper</b> , Hoary Edge, Southern and Northern Cloudywings, <b>Gray Hairstreak</b>
Roundheaded Bush-clover	<i>Lespedeza capitata</i>	Hoary Edge, Southern and Northern Cloudywings
<b>Grass Family:</b>		
Bluegrasses	<i>Poa</i> spp.	<b>Little Wood-Satyr, Common Wood-Nymph, Peck's Skipper, Tawny-edged Skipper, Northern Broken-Dash, Crossline Skipper, Delaware Skipper, Hobomok Skipper</b>
Panic grasses	<i>Panicum</i> spp.	Northern Pearly-eye, <b>Indian Skipper, Delaware Skipper, Hobomok Skipper</b>
Bluestem Grasses	<i>Andropogon</i> , <i>Schizachyrium</i>	Northern Pearly-eye, <b>Common Wood-Nymph, Indian Skipper</b>
Bottlebrush Grass	<i>Elymus hystrix</i>	Northern Pearly-eye
Purpletop Tridens	<i>Tridens flavus</i>	<b>Common Wood-Nymph, Crossline Skipper, Little Glassywing, Zabulon Skipper</b>
<b>Shrubs:</b>		
Blueberries	<i>Vaccinium</i> spp.	<b>Striped Hairstreak, Spring Azure</b>
Viburnums	Native <i>Viburnum</i> spp.	<b>Spring Azure</b>
Dogwoods (shrub)	<i>Cornus sericea</i> , <i>amomum</i> , <i>racemosa</i>	<b>Summer Azure</b>
Spicebush	<i>Lindera benzoin</i>	<b>Spicebush Swallowtail</b>
Prickly-ash	<i>Zanthoxylum americanum</i>	<b>Giant Swallowtail</b>
Common Hoptree	<i>Ptelea trifoliata</i>	<b>Giant Swallowtail</b>
Willows	<i>Salix</i> spp.	<b>Mourning Cloak, Viceroy, Red-spotted Purple</b>
Winged Sumac	<i>Rhus copallina</i>	<b>Red-banded Hairstreak</b>
<b>Trees:</b>		
Oaks	<i>Quercus</i> spp.	Banded, Oak and White M Hairstreaks; Sleepy, Juvenal's and Horace's Duskywings
Hickories	<i>Carya</i> spp.	Hickory Hairstreak
Elms	<i>Ulmus</i> spp.	<b>Question Mark, Mourning Cloak</b>
Eastern Redcedar	<i>Juniperus virginiana</i>	Juniper Hairstreak

<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Scientific Name</b>	<b>Butterfly Species</b>
Sweetbay	<i>Magnolia virginiana</i>	<b>Eastern Tiger Swallowtail</b>
Black Cherry	<i>Prunus serotina</i>	<b>Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Coral Hairstreak, Striped Hairstreak, Red-spotted Purple</b>
Birches	<i>Betula</i> spp.	<b>Red-spotted Purple</b>
Tuliptree	<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>	<b>Eastern Tiger Swallowtail</b>
Pines	<i>Pinus</i> spp.	Eastern Pine Elfin
Hackberry	<i>Celtis occidentalis</i>	<b>Hackberry and Tawny Emperors, American Snout, Question Mark, Mourning Cloak</b>
Sassafras	<i>Sassafras albidum</i>	<b>Spicebush Swallowtail</b>
Aspens / Poplars	<i>Populus</i> spp.	<b>Mourning Cloak, Red-spotted Purple, Viceroy, Dreamy Duskywing</b>
Black Locust	<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>	<b>Silver-spotted Skipper</b>
Willows	<i>Salix</i> spp.	<b>Mourning Cloak, Viceroy, Red-spotted Purple</b>

## LEARN MORE ABOUT NJ BUTTERFLIES AND NATIVE PLANTS

### Butterfly Gardening Books

*Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens*  
by Douglas W. Tallamy

*The Butterfly Garden: Creating Beautiful Gardens to Attract Butterflies*  
by Jerry Sedenko

*Butterfly Gardening: Creating Summer Magic in Your Garden*  
by Xerces Society/Smithsonian Institution

*The National Wildlife Federation Guide to Gardening for Wildlife: How to Create a Beautiful Backyard Habitat for Birds, Butterflies and Other Wildlife*  
by Craig Tufts and Peter Loewer

*Stokes Butterfly Book: The Complete Guide to Butterfly Gardening, Identification, and Behavior*  
by Donald and Lillian Stokes

### NJ Organizations & Eco-Friendly Landscaping

[North American Butterfly Association - North Jersey Butterfly Club](#)

[Native Plant Society of New Jersey](#)

[Jersey-Friendly Yards](#)



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## WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE A FREE PACKET OF NATIVE PLANT SEEDS?

Just send a self addressed stamped envelope to:  
Vicky Katzman / Butterfly Habitat  
222 Hamilton Avenue  
Glen Rock, NJ 07452

“How to Create Butterfly Habitat in New Jersey”  
has been created by Rutgers Environmental Steward volunteer Vicky Katzman in partnership with the Rutgers Environmental Steward Program and the Native Plant Society of New Jersey.



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