

Butterfly Caterpillar Host Plants

Butterfly caterpillars are very picky eaters! Some will only eat the plants in a specific genus. Others may enjoy a broader selection but still limit their diet to plants in a certain taxonomic family. The following list includes host plants for some of the common Illinois butterfly species.

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Butterfly Common Name	Butterfly Genus	Host Plants
Black Swallowtail	<i>Papilio polyxenes</i>	carrot family - Angelica, Zizia, dill, parsley, fennel
Buckeye	<i>Junonia coenia</i>	plantain, snapdragon, vervain, stonecrop, ruellia
Cabbage White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>	cabbage, cleome, mustards, nasturtium
Comma, Question Mark	<i>Polygonia comma, Polygonia interrogationis</i>	hops vine, nettles, elm, hackberry
Eastern Tailed Blue	<i>Everes comyntas</i>	legumes, including vetches, clovers, alfalfa
Fiery Skipper, European Skipper	<i>Hylephila phyleus Thymelicus lineola</i>	assorted grasses
Fritillaries	<i>Boloria spp. Speyeria spp.</i>	violets
Giant Swallowtail	<i>Papilio cresphontes</i>	prickly ash, citrus, rue, hops tree
Gray Hairstreak	<i>Strymon melinus</i>	wide variety of plants - oaks, strawberry, legumes and mallow
Monarch	<i>Danus plexippus</i>	genus Asclepias - milkweeds
Morning Cloak	<i>Nymphalis antiopa</i>	willow, aspen, elm, birch, hackberry
Painted Lady, American Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui Vanessa virginiensis</i>	composites, mallows, thistle
Pearl Crescent	<i>Phyciodes tharos</i>	asters
Pipevine Swallowtail	<i>Battus philenor</i>	pipevines, Virginia snakeroot
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	nettles, false nettles, hops
Red-Spotted Purple	<i>Limenitis arthemis</i>	apple, aspen, cherry, hawthorn, poplar, willow
Silver-Spotted Skipper	<i>Epargyreus clarus</i>	wisteria, locusts, beans, tick trefoil
Spicebush Swallowtail	<i>Papilio troilus</i>	spicebush, sassafras, bays
Spring Azure	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>	blueberry, dogwood, viburnum, new jersey tea, wild cherry, spirea
Sulphurs	<i>Colias spp., Nathalis iole Phoebis sennae</i>	legumes - alfalfa, clovers, false indigo, sennas, vetch, marigold, sneezeweed
Tiger Swallowtail	<i>Papilio glaucus</i>	many trees - birch, lilac, cherry, tulip, willows
Viceroy	<i>Limenitis archippus</i>	willow, poplar, aspen, apple, cherry, plum



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Butterfly Nectar Plants

Perennials

Genus	Common Name	Bloom Time
<i>Achillea</i> spp.	yarrow	summer
<i>Asclepias</i> spp.	milkweed, butterfly weed	summer
<i>Buddleia</i>	butterfly bush	summer - fall
<i>Calamintha nepeta</i> ssp. <i>nepeta</i>	lesser calamint	summer - fall
<i>Coreopsis</i> spp.	tickseed	summer - fall
<i>Doellingeria</i> , <i>Eurybia</i> , <i>Ionactis</i> , <i>Oclemena</i> , <i>Symphytotrichum</i>	aster	late summer - fall
<i>Echinacea</i> spp.	coneflower	summer - fall
<i>Eryngium yuccifolium</i>	rattlesnake master	summer
<i>Eupatorium</i> , <i>Eupatoriadelphus</i>	Joe Pye weed	summer - fall
<i>Helenium</i> spp.	sneezeweed	late summer - fall
<i>Heliopsis</i> spp.	sunflower	late summer - fall
<i>Leucanthemum</i> spp.	daisy	summer - fall
<i>Liatris</i> spp.	blazing star, gayfeather	summer - fall
<i>Monarda</i> spp.	bee balm	summer - early fall
<i>Nepeta</i> spp.	catmint	early summer - fall
<i>Rudbeckia</i> spp.	black-eyed and brown-eyed Susan	summer - fall
<i>Sedum</i>	sedum, stonecrop	spring, summer, fall
<i>Silphium</i> spp.	various	summer - fall
<i>Solidago</i> spp.	goldenrod	late summer - fall
<i>Vernonia</i> spp.	ironweed	summer - fall
<i>Veronica</i> spp.	speedwell	summer - fall

Shrubs

Genus	Common Name	Bloom Time
<i>Amorpha canescens</i>	lead plant	summer
<i>Buddleia</i>	butterfly bush	summer - fall
<i>Caryopteris x clandonensis</i>	bluebeard, blue mist shrub	late summer - fall
<i>Ceanothus americanus</i>	New Jersey tea	summer
<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>	button bush	early summer
<i>Clethra alnifolia</i>	summersweet	summer
<i>Diervilla lonicera</i>	bush honeysuckle	spring - summer
<i>Hydrangea</i> spp.	hydrangea	summer
<i>Itea virginica</i>	sweetspire	summer
<i>Philadelphus</i> spp.	mock orange	late spring - summer
<i>Physocarpus opulifolius</i>	ninebark	late spring - early summer
<i>Potentilla fruticosa</i>	potentilla	summer - fall
<i>Rosa</i> spp.	rose	summer - fall
<i>Sambucus</i> spp.	elderberry	summer
<i>Spiraea</i> spp.	spirea	late spring - fall
<i>Syringa</i> spp.	lilac	spring
<i>Viburnum</i> spp.	viburnum	spring - early summer