



Nature by Design

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Common Butterflies in Ventura County and Their Host Plants

- Monarch** Probably the best known butterfly in North America, the Monarch makes yearly migrations to over-wintering sites in Southern California and Mexico. They start arriving around August and stay until February. Butterfly is orange with black margins on wings and black vein markings. Wingspan 4"
Host plant: asclepias (milkweed)
- Western Tiger Swallowtail** Large yellow and black striped butterfly with "tails" that frequents gardens throughout the summer. Wingspan to 5"
Host plants: willow, poplar, cottonwood, sycamore
- Cabbage White** Introduced from Europe to North America in 19th century, off-white with gray wingtip. Wingspan 2"
Host Plants: mustards, cabbage (garden pest), nasturtium
- Painted Lady** Most widely distributed butterfly in the world. Often seen in weedy areas; some years migrates in great numbers in spring. Orange with black markings. Wingspan 2 1/2"
Host Plants: prefers thistles but will feed on hollyhocks, cheeseweed, lupine and sunflowers.
- Mourning Cloak** Large, dark brown butterfly with blue-spotted, yellow margin on wings. A long lived butterfly, it is sometimes seen on winter days. Wingspan 3"
Host Plants: willow, elm, birch, cottonwood
- Buckeye** Brown and orange butterfly with large "eyespot" on wings. Wingspan 2 1/4"
Host Plants: plantain, verbena, snapdragon, monkeyflower
- Red Admiral** Widespread butterfly related to Painted Ladies; fast and flighty. Likes to sip from tree sap and rotten fruit. Dark brown with orange band vertically across forewing and white wingtip. Wingspan 2 1/2"
Host Plants: nettle and false nettle, baby tears
- Skipper** Stout-bodied with shorter wings than true butterflies. Known by powerful, erratic, jerky flight, they perch with forewings held upright and hindwings flat.
- Fiery Skipper** Bright yellow-orange with blackish markings; is often seen around lawns. Wingspan 2 1/2"
Host Plants: various grasses
- Blue** Some of the most beautiful butterflies, including the smallest butterfly in North America, these small bits of blue can literally resemble a flash of color like a flying flower.
Host Plants: buckwheat, lupine, plumbago
- Gulf Fritillary** Introduced from tropics and naturalized in Southern California, the butterfly is orange with spotted brown border on the hindwings. Wingspan 2 3/4"
Host Plant: passionflower vine
- Orange Sulphur** Commonly seen all year, especially around alfalfa fields.
Host Plants: various legumes including clovers, vetch, lotus
- California Dogface** This is California's official state butterfly and is so named because of the resemblance to a dog's face on the tops of the forewings. They are usually seen near streams in nearby mountains.
Host Plant: false indigo



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Top Butterfly Nectar Plants

Butterflies favor a diversity of big, flat clusters of small flowers that provide both nectar and a convenient place to land. They also need plants to act as food plants (hosts) for their larvae (caterpillars). Although many different kinds of butterflies will visit the flowers in your garden, the larval food plants are specific to the types of butterflies whose caterpillars feed on them. The following are some of the best butterfly plant groups to include your garden .

Botanical Name

Achillea
Asclepias *
Buddleia
Ceanothus
Centranthus ruber
Coreopsis
Duranta
Echinacea purpurea
Eriogonum *
Foeniculum vulgare *
Gaillardia
Gaura lindheimeri
Heliotropium arborescens
Lantana
Leucanthemum superbum
Lupine *
Passiflora *
Pentas lanceolata
Plumbago auriculata *
Rudbeckia
Salvia
Scabiosa
Tagetes
Tithonia
Verbena (Particularly verbena bonariensis)

Common Name

Yarrow
Milkweed
Butterfly bush

Jupiter's beard
Tickseed
Sky flower
Coneflowers
Buckwheat
Fennel

Butterfly flowers
Heliotrope

Shasta daisy

Passionflower
Star clusters

Gloriosa daisies
Sage
Pincushion flowers
Marigold
Mexican sunflower

* Larval (host) plants for specific butterflies