

Food for Caterpillars

Ohio is home to over 140 different types of butterflies, but only a portion will show up in your yard. A great way to encourage these beautiful yet delicate creatures to visit your gardens is to provide food for them. Caterpillars can be very picky eaters. In fact, some butterflies, such as Monarchs, can only eat one type of plant as a caterpillar (Milkweed – *Asclepias*). By planting food for caterpillars, you are not only encouraging adult butterflies to spend more time in your garden but also helping with butterfly conservation. Below is a list of some of the most common butterflies and moths found in Ohio, and the plants their caterpillars require.

[Eastern Tiger Swallowtail \(*Papilio glaucus*\)](#) – Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*), Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), Tulip Tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), and Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*).

[Spicebush Swallowtail \(*Papilio troilus*\)](#) – Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*), and laurels (*Lauraceae*).

[Eastern Black Swallowtail \(*Papilio polyxenes*\)](#) – Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), Dill (*Anethum graveolens*), and native/non-native species in the parsley family (*Apiaceae*).

[Pearl Crescent \(*Phyciodes tharos*\)](#) – Aster varieties like New England Aster (*Symphotrichum novae-angliae*).

[Red Admiral \(*Vanessa atalanta*\)](#) – Wood Nettle (*Laportea canadensis*), Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), and Pennsylvania Pellitory (*Parietaria pensylvanica*).

[Question Mark \(*Polygona interrogationis*\)](#) – Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*), American Elm (*Ulmus americana*), Red/Slipper Elm (*Ulmus rubra*), Stinging Nettle (*Urtica procera*), and False Nettle (*Boehmeria cylindrica*).

[Monarch \(*Danaus plexippus*\)](#) – Up to 13 species of milkweed that are found in Ohio including Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*), and Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*).

[Great Spangled Fritillary \(*Speyeria cybele*\)](#) – Many of the twenty-six different species of Violets (*Viola spp.*) found in Ohio.

[Northern Pearly-Eye \(*Enodia anhedon*\)](#) – Grass species like Bottlebrush Grass (*Elymus hystrix*), River Oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*), Long-Awned Wood Grass (*Brachyelytrum erectum*), and White Grass (*Leersia virginica*).

[Silver-Spotted Skipper \(*Epargyreus clarus*\)](#) – Plants in the pea family (*Fabaceae*), including Partridge Pea (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*), Black Locust (*Robina pseudoacacia*), and Honey-Locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*).

[Spring & Summer Azure \(*Celastrina ladon/Celastrina neglecta*\)](#) – Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*), Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*), and Wingstem (*Verbesina alternifolia*) for Summer Azures.

[Pipevine Swallowtail \(*Battus philenor*\)](#) – Pipevine family (*Aristolochiaceae spp.*), Virginia Snakeroot (*Aristolochia virginiana*), and Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*).

[Zebra Swallowtail \(*Eurytides marcellus*\)](#) – Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*)

[Cabbage White \(*Pieris rapae*\)](#) – Wide variety of plants from the Mustard family (*Brassicaceae*), like cabbages, brussel sprouts, mustards, radish, and broccoli.

[Eastern Tailed-Blue \(*Cupido comyntas*\)](#) – Bush Clover (*Lespedeza*), Clover (*Trifolium*), and Alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*).

[Mourning Cloak \(*Nymphalis antiopa*\)](#) – Black Willow (*Salix nigra*) and American Elm (*Ulmus americana*).

[Common Buckeye \(*Junonia coenia*\)](#) – Figwort family (*Scrophulariaceae*), Plantain family (*Plantaginaceae*), Vervain family (*Verbenaceae*), and Acanthus family (*Acanthaceae*).

[Red-Spotted Purple \(*Limenitis arthemis*\)](#) – Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*), Poplars and Aspen (*Populus spp.*).

[Viceroy \(*Limenitis archippus*\)](#) – Cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*), Pussy Willow (*Salix discolor*), Black Willow (*Salix nigra*), and Sandbar Willow (*Salix interior*).

[Luna Moth \(*Actias luna*\)](#) – White Birch (*Betula papyrifera*), Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*), Sweet Gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), Sumac (*Rhus spp.*), Walnuts (*Juglans*), and Hickories (*Carya*).

[Polyphemus Moth \(*Antheraea polyphemus*\)](#) – Oak varieties (*Quercus spp.*), Willow varieties (*Salix spp.*), Maple varieties (*Acer spp.*), and Birch varieties (*Betula spp.*).

[Cecropia Silk Moth \(*Hyalophora cecropia*\)](#) – Box Elder (*Acer negundo*), Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharinum*), Apple varieties (*Malus spp.*), Willow varieties (*Salix spp.*), Dogwoods (*Cornus florida*), and Birch varieties (*Betula spp.*).

[Clearwing/Hummingbird Sphinx Moth \(*Hemaris thysbe*\)](#) – Honeysuckle (*Lonicera spp.*), Coralberry (*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*), Cherry varieties (*Prunus spp.*), and Viburnum varieties (*Viburnum spp.*).