Lifecycle of the Fluttering Set

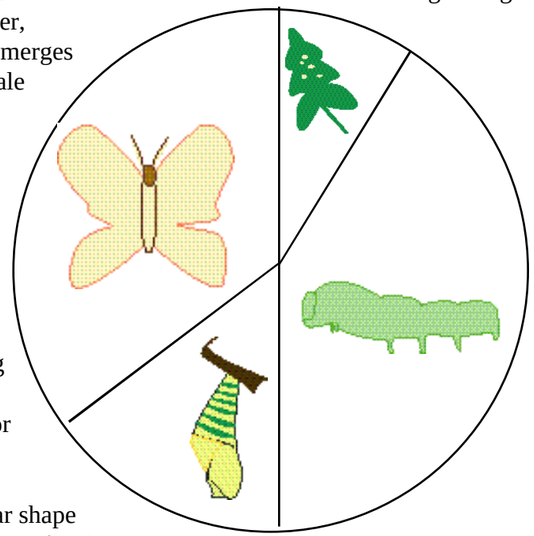
Most babies look a lot like their parents—just smaller. Not butterflies. They have four completely different life stages: egg, larvae, pupa and adult.

During the larval stage (often called caterpillars), the budding butterflies mostly eat leaves—and sometimes from just one plant or group of plants. Adults are often less fussy, but still have their preferences.

Therefore the kind of plants in your garden will also determine the kind of butterflies in your garden.

Adults: Actual lifespan can vary, depending on species and weather conditions. However, once the butterfly emerges and mates, the female lays eggs and the cyle begins again.

Egg: 5-10 days. The female butterfly will attach the eggs to plants that will serve as food for the growing larvae.



Larvae: 2-4 weeks. The larva, or caterpillar, has a hearty appetite for leaves, often of a very specific plant or group of plants. As the larva eats, it outgrows its skin and sheds it for a new one. This will happen four to six times.

Pupa: About 10-15 days (in warm weather—but many species spend the winter in this form, emerging as butterflies in the spring). The pupa or chrysalis is a very quiet stage during which the caterpillar shape dissolves and the butterfly shape is formed. The pupae often attach themselves to twigs or leaves and may take on the color of the surrounding plant material.

Not All Wildlife Live in Parks—Citizen Care is Critical

Your backyard is yours—but you may be happy to share it with wildflowers, butterflies, birds and other creatures by providing habitat, such as the plants discussed on these pages. Parks and forests are wonderful places to visit, but birds, fish, insects, plants and other wildlife depend on the generosity of those who own and manage private lands too. Private places like California's farms and ranches, and private places like your backyard.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service, together with Resource Conservation Districts, provide scientific information and planning assistance for the many California farmers and ranchers who voluntarily choose to make their land both productive and hospitable to fish and wildlife. Thanks for reading this fact sheet and caring about conservation...and for being part of the habitat solution.

Creating Butterfly Gardens

U.S. Department of Agriculture • Natural Resources Conservation Service • California

Butterflies in the Garden

Gardens are special places—full of color and fragrance. With just a little planning, they can also be full of movement and life, inviting creatures to join the beautiful collection of plants. Butterflies add welcome and elegant flashes of color to almost any garden—and you can easily accomodate them in your own backyard.

A sunny spot that offers some protection from the wind is a good place to start. Then begin planning a collection of plants that grow well in your area and will provide nectar throughout the season. To be a full-service butterfly hotel, your garden will also need food for caterpillars—plants which may be trees or weeds or may not prove as decorative as others in your garden. Homes and schools near woods or meadows get the edge here—but even urban dwellers may find ways to add some of these plants to the garden.

A little attention to moisture (many butterflies like to drink from puddles or moist areas) and insecticides (just say "no") is also appreciated.

Making Your Yard a Home

Butterflies will think your yard looks like home if you consider and provide for these needs:

1) Nectar for adults—found in many flowering plants
2) Plants for caterpillars—they need leafy foods, different than the adults
3) Shelter—they can fly and feed better without being blown about
4) Sun—to warm their wings for smooth flying, and also to feed the plants that feed them.

How well do you know Butterflies?

True or False:

1) Butterflies lived at the same time as dinosaurs
2) Butterflies, and their cousins the moths, are the largest group of insects
3) Humans can see more colors than butterflies
4) The white "eye spots" on butterfly wings are created by pockets of light-reflecting air
5) A butterfly's entire body is covered with scales, even their feet
6) Butterflies have six feet—and they can taste with them
7) Most butterflies migrate to escape the winter

1) T; 2)F (second largest); 3) F (they see all colors we see, plus some ultraviolets); 4) T; 5) T; 6) T; 7) F (Most overwinter as pupae or eggs. Monarchs are a spectacular exception that can be observed overwintering in throngs in Monterey & S. Calif.

Choosing Nectar Plants:

To provide for season-long butterfly visits, choose a mix of nectar-rich species, with blooming times that run from spring to fall. Both annuals and perennials are possibilities. Remember to plan for the unique height (taller ones go in back) and color combinations that each type of plant will add to the garden. Below is a partial list of plants that do well in many areas of California, but check with your local nursery or Cooperative Extension Service Master Gardener for the best choices in your area.

I. Annuals

Ageratum (Ageratum Houstonianum)
Cosmos (Cosmos bipinnatus)
Lantana (Lantana camara)
Lunaria (Lunaria annua)
Marigold (Tagetes patula)
Flowering tobacco (Nicotiana spp.)
Pentas (Pentas lanceolata)
Petunia (Petunia hybrida)
Statice (Limonium sinuatum)
Verbena (Verbena spp.)
Zinnia (Zinnia elegans)

II. Perennials:

Aster /Michaelmas Daisy (Aster spp.)
Bee balm (Monarda didyma)
Black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia spp.)
Butterfly bush (Buddleia spp.)
Butterfly weed (Asclepias tuberosa)
Cape Plumbago (Plumbago auriculata)
Catnip (Nepeta mussinii)
Ceanothus (Ceanothus spp.)
Chives (Allium schoenoprasum)
Coreposis (Coreopsis spp.)
Gaillardia/Blanket flower (Gaillardia grandifola)
Lavender (Lavandula angustifolia)
Liatris (Liatris spp.)
Phlox (Phlox spp.)
Purple Coneflower (Echinacea purpurea)
Scabiosa (Scabiosa atropurpurea)
Yarrow (Achillea filipendulina)

California Caterpillar Cuisine
(aka foods for butterfly larvae)

Aspen, cottonwood (Populus spp.)
Birch (Betula spp.)
Blueberry (Vaccinium spp.)
Cabbage, broccoli (Brassica spp.)
Cherry (Prunus spp.)
Citrus (Citrus spp.)
Dogwood (Cornus spp.)
Elm (Ulmus spp.)
False indigo (Amorpha spp.)
False nettle (Boehmeria spp.)
Grasses, sedges
Hackberry (Celtis spp.)
Knotweed (Polygonum spp.)
Lupine (Lupinus spp.)
Mallow (Malva spp.)
Marigold (Tagetes spp.)
Meadowsweet (Spiraea spp.)
Milkweed (Asclepias spp.)
Nettle (Urtica spp.)
Oak (Quercus spp.)
Parsley (Petroselinum crispum)
Passionflower (Passiflora spp.)
Plantain (Plantago spp.)
Snapgdragon (Antirrhinum spp.)
Sorrel, dock (Rumex spp.)
Sweet fennel (Foeniculum vulgare)
Thistle (Cirsium spp.)
Vetch (Vicia spp.)
Willow (Salix spp.)
Winter cress (Barbarea spp.)

Some of California's Many Butterfly Species

Name	*Favorite Larvae Foods:*	*Adult food:*
Anise Swallowtail	Sweet fennel, citrus trees	Nectar
Western Tiger Swallowtail	Aspens, polars, willows, alders, ashes	Nectar
Checkered White	Mustards	Nectar
Sara Orange Tip	Mustards	Nectar
Alfalfa Sulphur	Alfalfa, vetches, clover	Nectar/puddling
Dog Face	Indigo bush, prairie clover	Nectar/puddling
Purplish Copper	Docks, knotweeds	Nectar
Mormon Metalmark	Wild buckwheat	Nectar
Brown Elfin	Blueberry, bearbery	Nectar
Gray Hairstreak	Legumes, mallows, others	Nectar
Spring Azure	Dogwood, wild cherry	Nectar/puddling
Silvery Blue	Lupine, other legumes	Nectar/puddling
Western Tailed Blue	Vetches, other legumes	Nectar/puddling
Snout Butterfly	Hackberry	Nectar/rotting fruit
Mourning Cloak	Willows, aspens, elms, birch, hackberry	Sap, fruit, puddling
Milbert's Tortoiseshell	Nettles	Nectar, some sap, fruit
Buckeye	Plantains, snapdragons	Nectar/puddling
Painted Lady	Thistles, composites, hollyhocks, borage	Nectar
Red Admiral	Nettles	Sap, fruit, dung, nectar
West Coast Lady	Mallows, nettles	Nectar, dung
Sister	Oaks	Nectar, fruit, puddling
Lorquin's Admiral	Willows, aspens, cottonwoods, chokecherry	Nectar/puddling
Ringlet	Grasses	Nectar
Monarch	Milkweeds	Nectar
Queen	Milkweeds	Nectar

Hold that Hoe!

Even the much maligned dandelion (Taraxacum officinale) can have a place in a butterfly garden, offering both food for butterflies— and a great excuse for those who haven't found the time to discourage them.

However the Michaelmas daisy (Aster hybrid) is also very attractive to butterflies—and to most onlookers as well.