

Butterfly Gardening in Central Texas

Butterflies Commonly Found in Central Texas:

Use this list to compare butterflies you have seen to those in field guides. Many butterflies look alike, but if the butterfly you have spotted is in this list, it's likely to be the right one—

American Lady (<i>Vanessa virginiensis</i>)	Horace's Duskywing (<i>Erynnis horatius</i>)
American Snout (<i>Libytheana carinenta</i>)	Juniper Hairstreak (<i>Callophrys gryneus</i>)
Black Swallowtail (<i>Papilio polyxenes</i>)	Juvenal's Duskywing (<i>Erynnis juvenalis</i>)
Brazilian Skipper (<i>Calpodus ethlius</i>)	Large Orange Sulphur (<i>Phoebis agarithe</i>)
Broad-winged Skipper (<i>Poanes viator</i>)	Little Wood Satyr (<i>Megisto cymela</i>)
Carolina Satyr (<i>Hermeuptychia sosybius</i>)	Little Yellow (<i>Pyrisitia lisa</i>)
Ceraunus Blue (<i>Hemiargus ceraunus</i>)	Long-tailed Skipper (<i>Urbanus proteus</i>)
Clouded Skipper (<i>Lerema accius</i>)	Monarch (<i>Danaus plexippus</i>)
Cloudless Sulphur (<i>Phoebis sennae</i>)	Morning-glory Prominent (<i>Schizura ipomoeae</i>)
Cobweb Skipper (<i>Hesperia metea</i>)	Northern Cloudywing (<i>Thorybes pylades</i>)
Common Buckeye (<i>Junonia coenia</i>)	Northern Sicklewing (<i>Eantis tamenund</i>)
Common Mestra (<i>Mestra amymone</i>)	Orange Skipperling (<i>Copaeodes aurantiaca</i>)
Common Sootywing (<i>Pholisora catullus</i>)	Orange Sulphur (<i>Colias eurytheme</i>)
Dainty Sulphur (<i>Nathalis iole</i>)	Pearl Crescent (<i>Phyciodes tharos</i>)
Delaware Skipper (<i>Anatrytone logan</i>)	Phaon Crescent (<i>Phyciodes phaon</i>)
Dotted Skipper (<i>Hesperia attalus</i>)	Pipevine Swallowtail (<i>Battus philenor</i>)
Dun Skipper (<i>Euphyes vestris</i>)	Queen (<i>Danaus gilippus</i>)
Dusky-blue Groundstreak (<i>Calycopis isobeon</i>)	Question Mark (<i>Polygonia interrogationis</i>)
Eastern Comma (<i>Polygonia comma</i>)	Reakirt's Blue (<i>Echinargus isola</i>)
Eastern Tailed-Blue (<i>Cupido comyntas</i>)	Red Admiral (<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>)
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (<i>Papilio glaucus</i>)	Red-banded Hairstreak (<i>Calycopis cecrops</i>)
Eufala Skipper (<i>Lerodea eufala</i>)	Sachem (<i>Atalopedes campestris</i>)
Falcate Orangetip (<i>Anthocharis midea</i>)	Silver-spotted Skipper (<i>Epargyreus clarus</i>)
Fiery Skipper (<i>Hylephila phyleus</i>)	Silvery Checkerspot (<i>Chlosyne nycteis</i>)
Funereal Duskywing (<i>Erynnis funeralis</i>)	Sleepy Orange (<i>Abaeis nicippe</i>)
Giant Swallowtail (<i>Papilio cressphontes</i>)	Southern Broken-Dash (<i>Wallengrenia otho</i>)
Goatweed Leafwing (<i>Anaea andria</i>)	Southern Cloudywing (<i>Thorybes bathyllus</i>)
Gorgone Checkerspot (<i>Chlosyne gorgone</i>)	Southern Dogface (<i>Zerene cesonia</i>)
Graphic Crescent (<i>Phyciodes graphica</i>)	Southern Hairstreak (<i>Satyrrium favonius</i>)
Gray Hairstreak (<i>Strymon melinus</i>)	Southern Skipperling (<i>Copaeodes minima</i>)
Great Purple Hairstreak (<i>Atlides halesus</i>)	Tawny Emperor (<i>Asterocampa clyton</i>)
Gulf Fritillary (<i>Agraulis vanillae</i>)	Texan Crescent (<i>Anthanassa texana</i>)
Hackberry Emperor (<i>Asterocampa celtis</i>)	Viceroy (<i>Limenitis archippus</i>)
Hayhurst's Scallopwing (<i>Staphylus hayhurstii</i>)	Western Pygmy-Blue (<i>Brephidium exilis</i>)
Henry's Elfin (<i>Callophrys henrici</i>)	Zebra Heliconian (<i>Heliconius charithonia</i>)

Host Plants:

These are plants that butterflies use to lay their eggs on and to provide food for the caterpillars.

Alfalfa	Catalpa	Mesquite and other	Radish
Althea	Cottonwood	woody legumes	Redbud
Apple	Dill	Mullein	Snapdragon Vine
Asclepias (milkweed)	Elm	Oak	Sumac
Ash	Esperanza	Okra	Sunflower
Garden Beans	False Nettle	Parsley	St. Augustine
Beets	Fennel	Passionvine	Texas Persimmon
Bermuda	Hackberry	Peach	Thistle
Blue Bonnets	Holly	Pear	Wax Myrtle
Buckeye	Hops	Peas	Willow
Borage	Ironwood	Pecan	Woolly Croton
Carrots	Lantana	Pipevine	
Clover	Mallow	Plum	

Nectar Sources:

Food Sources for adult butterflies

Aster	Echinacea	Marigold	Thistle
Butterfly Bush	Goldenrod	Milkweed	Verbena
Clover	Lantana	Rotting fruit, sap	Vetch

Nectar flowers for adults—The best nectar is obtained from flowers growing in a sunny location from healthy, well-watered plants. Often native plants produce the best nectar and should be planted in soil like they naturally grow in, in conditions that duplicate their natural preferences. Water perennial nectar sources in the winter if it doesn't rain enough to insure ample nectar in the spring. Try to plant a variety of flowering plants, with the goal of keeping something in bloom as many months of the year as possible.

Purple, pink, yellow, and white are the favorite colors of flowers to butterflies. They seem to like blue or blue green the least. Some flowers have guide marks such as a dark streak at the base of the petals to guide the butterfly to the nectar source. Flowers also have odors that give information to the butterfly. If a flower has been pollinated, it may give off a different scent and the butterfly will know that the flower is now making fruit, not nectar and will avoid it. Overhead watering can often wash away nectar and make the flower useless to butterflies for several hours. Watering can also damage delicate wings. Try to always water from drip irrigation or soaker hoses.

Food recipe:

Combine 1 can beer, 1 lb brown sugar, ½ cup dark molasses, and some rotten fruit such as a blackened banana together. Mix together and add liquid to make it moist enough for the butterflies to be able to sip. Ferment in an open container for a day, then set outside for butterflies. You need to use a very shallow container. Keep in mind how small butterflies are and how short their legs are. Rotten fruit can also be placed around the garden, such as bananas, plums, persimmons, and watermelon. They also like crushed grapes and berries mixed with a little molasses and allowed to slightly ferment. They like it better with a little beer mixed in. Place in shallow dishes near the edge of the flower beds where escape from predators is easier.

Puddling:

Some butterflies, such as Tiger Swallowtails, like to sip from mud puddles. You can fill a shallow container such as a garbage can lid with a mixture of sand and mud. Sprinkle a little manure and salt over the top and place in a sunny area. You will have to moisten this frequently.

Shelter and Sun:

Butterflies need to warm their bodies in cooler weather. Provide a smooth stone in an open area for them to rest on while they sun themselves in the morning. Be sure it gets good morning light. Shelter can be provided by leaning some old boards against a fence, or by buying or making a butterfly house. A piece of shingle or cedar inside provides a perch.

Keep in mind that butterfly larva do not always look like the picture in a field guide. This is because the caterpillars go through several stages of growth, and they may not look the same in each of these stages. Be patient and wait to see what occurs over time. You can learn a lot about these fascinating creatures through observation.