PLANT SOURCES FOR BUTTERFLY LARVAE
(all native to Connecticut)

Compiled by North Central Conservation District, Ruth Klue

**Woody Plants:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Woody Plant</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
<th>Hosts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Hornbeam</td>
<td><em>Carpinus caroliniana</em></td>
<td>(host to Tiger Swallowtail)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashes</td>
<td><em>Fraxinus species</em></td>
<td>(host to the Gray Comma)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azaleas, native deciduous</td>
<td><em>Rhododendron sp.</em></td>
<td>(host to the Coral Hairstreak)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birches</td>
<td><em>Betula sp.</em></td>
<td>(host to Mourning Cloak, Red Admiral,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dreamy Duskywings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Chokeberry</td>
<td><em>Aronia melanocarpa</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Huckleberry</td>
<td><em>Gaylussacia baccata</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blueberries</td>
<td><em>Vaccinium species</em></td>
<td>(host to Spring Azure, Common Blue)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogwoods</td>
<td><em>Cornus species</em></td>
<td>(host to Question Mark, Mourning Cloak,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hackberry Emperor, Tawny Emperor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Red Cedar</td>
<td><em>Juniperus virginiana</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hackberry Tree</td>
<td><em>Celtis occidentalis</em></td>
<td>(host to Spring Azure, Common Blue)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oaks</td>
<td><em>Quercus species</em></td>
<td>(host to Banded Hairstreaks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweetbay Magnolia</td>
<td><em>Magnolia virginiana</em></td>
<td>(host to Tiger Swallowtail)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey Tea</td>
<td><em>Ceanothus americanus</em></td>
<td>(host to Spring Azure, Common Blue)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherries, Plums</td>
<td><em>Prunus species</em> (native)</td>
<td>(host to Coral Hairstreak, Tiger Swallowtail, Red-Spotted Purple)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(host to Spicebush Swallowtail)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spicebush</td>
<td><em>Lindera benzoin</em></td>
<td>(host to Banded Hairstreaks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sumac</td>
<td><em>Rhus species</em></td>
<td>(host to Spring Azure)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulip Tree</td>
<td><em>Liriodendron</em></td>
<td>(host to Tiger Swallowtail)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viburnum</td>
<td><em>Viburnum species</em></td>
<td>(host to Spring Azure, Common Blue)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Pine</td>
<td><em>Pinus strobus</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willow</td>
<td><em>Salix species</em></td>
<td>(host to Mourning Cloak, Viceroy, Dreamy Duskywings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winterberry</td>
<td><em>Ilex verticillata</em></td>
<td>(host to Henry’s Elfin)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Perennial Plants:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perennial Plant</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
<th>Hosts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alexanders</td>
<td><em>Zizea species</em></td>
<td>(host to Pearl Crescent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asters</td>
<td><em>Aster species</em></td>
<td>(host to Monarch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Cohosh</td>
<td><em>Cimicifuga species</em></td>
<td>(host to Common Buckeye)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milkweeds</td>
<td><em>Asclepias species</em></td>
<td>(host to Dun Skipper)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monkey flower</td>
<td><em>Mimulus ringens</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sedges</td>
<td><em>Carex species</em></td>
<td>(host to Patined Lady, silvery Checkerspot)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunflower</td>
<td><em>Helianthus species</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Switchgrass
**Panicum virgatum** (host to Skippers)

### Violets
**Viola species** (host to Great Spangled and Meadow Frittillaries)

### White Turtlehead
**Chelone glabra** (host to Baltimore Checkerspot)

### Wild Columbine
**Aquilegia canadensis** (host to Columbine duskywing)

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## PLANT SOURCES FOR BUTTERFLY NECTAR

### Woody Plants:

- **Azaleas, native deciduous**
  - *Rhododendron* species

- **Bayberry**
  - *Myrica pensylvanica*

- **Buttonbush**
  - *Cephalanthus occidentalis*

- **Cherries, Plums**
  - *Prunus* species

- **Dogwoods**
  - *Cornus* species

- **Elderberry**
  - *Sambucus canadensis*

- **Hackberry**
  - *Celtis occidentalis*

- **Laurels**
  - *Kalmia* species

- **New Jersey Tea**
  - *Ceanothus americanus*

- **Roses (native)**
  - *Rosa palustris, virginiana, etc.*

- **Sweet Pepperbush**
  - *Clethra alnifolia*

- **Shadbush**
  - *Amelanchier*

- **Spicebush**
  - *Lindera benzoin*

- **Spirea (Meadowsweet, Steeplebush)**
  - *Spiraea species*

- **Sumacs**
  - *Rhus* species

- **Sweetspire**
  - *Itea virginica*

- **Winterberry**
  - *Ilex verticillata*

### Perennial Plants:

- **Anise hyssop**
  - *Agastache foeniculum*

- **Asters**
  - *Aster* species

- **Beard Tongue**
  - *Penstemon digitalis, hirsutus*

- **Bee Balm**
  - *Monarda* species

- **Black-eyed Susan**
  - *Rudbeckia fulgida, hirta, laciniata*

- **Blazing Star**
  - *Liatris* species

- **Blue Lobelia**
  - *Lobelia siphilitica*

- **Blue Flag Iris**
  - *Iris versicolor*

- **Boneset**
  - *Eupatorium perfoliatum*

- **Cardinal flower**
  - *Lobelia cardinalis*

- **Coreopsis**
  - *Coreopsis verticillata, rosea* (‘Moonbeam’ sterile, not attractive)
Grasses are important for many butterflies for nectar and overwintering. In a meadow, have two-thirds grasses. Mow every three years to prevent woody vegetation from taking over. Seedheads are important over winter, so don’t mow until early spring. Remove invasives.

There is enormous habitat change that is dramatically reducing the kinds and numbers of butterflies in Connecticut, and elsewhere.

The Four Stages of Butterfly Life: The Metamorphosis

1. Eggs
2. Larval (caterpillar)
3. Chrysalis
4. Adult

Butterfly Needs through the Life Cycle:

Food

Eggs are laid on a larval host plant that hatched larvae prefer to feed on as caterpillars.
If larvae are provided for, butterflies will reside on site, not just pass through.

Caterpillars chew their food. Don’t kill the caterpillars: Chewed leaves won’t harm the plant.

Adult butterflies drink nectar from flowers

- They’re especially attracted to brightly-colored flowers with flat tops, which give easy access for landing and feeding.

- Single flowers are easier to get nectar from than double blossoms for butterflies, as are short rather than long flower tubes

Colors most attractive to butterflies: red, yellow, orange, pink/purple

Large numbers of the same species should be planted, because butterflies are attracted to massed color.

The role of native plants

- Butterflies and native plants co-evolved, dependent upon each other for survival. Flower nectar is provided to butterflies, and butterflies pollinate flowers.

- Many species use only one or two plant species and won’t survive if those plants are unavailable.

- Some “weedy” plants are critical to certain butterfly species.

- Butterflies are extremely sensitive to pesticides, even Bt. Do not use pesticides in the vicinity of the butterfly site.

Water

- Butterflies don’t like open water, e.g., a pond or a birdbath

- Butterflies do “puddling”: they land on a damp area and drink without drowning, and take up salts and minerals simultaneously

To create a “puddle”:

- Take advantage of or construct low areas designed to remain damp.
- Line the puddle with plastic, and place rocks on top.
- Try to keep water in the puddle during hot dry periods.
- Add a little manure for additional minerals.
For those with ponds or streams, the puddling area can be designed as a vegetated filter above the pond or stream that also functions to keep pond water clean.

**Shelter and the Climatic Environment**

Butterflies can't produce their own body heat.

They need sun at least 5-6 hours a day, and a southern exposure is ideal.

They need some protection from wind (also because of their delicate wings). Provide a sheltered spot, protected by trees or a hedge.

Provide flat rocks that get morning sun, and are protected from the wind. Butterflies need to warm up in the morning before capable of active flight.

Constant visits by numerous humans will discourage butterflies.

Butterflies overwinter, some as adults, many as eggs. They use large trees with deep bark crevices, hollow logs, rocks with crevices, etc.