

Butterfly Basics

6 Families:

Papilionidae ~ swallowtails

Riodinidae ~ metalmarks

Lycaenidae ~ gossamer-winged butterflies: blues & hairstreaks

Pieridae ~ whites & sulphurs

Nymphalidae ~ brush-footed butterflies: emperors, ladies, crescents, fritillaries, monarch, etc.

Hesperiidae ~ skippers

Some butterfly facts:

1. Butterflies have complete metamorphosis: egg, larva (caterpillar), pupa (chrysalis), and adult.
2. Butterflies will nectar at a variety of flowers, especially those with strong scents. Native wildflowers are best and hybrids are worst. Some butterflies prefer sap and rotting fruit to flowers.
3. Host plants for caterpillars are more specific than nectar plants. Female butterflies often hang around these before laying their eggs.
4. Male butterflies "puddle" in mud or wet gravel to get essential minerals. Male Queens obtain pheromone chemicals from Eupatorium, or Blue Mistflower.

Some central Texas host plants for the caterpillars of desirable butterfly species:

Passionflowers	Gulf Fritillary, Variegated Fritillary, Zebra Longwing
Pipevines	Pipevine Swallowtail
Milkweeds	Monarch, Queen
Wafer Ash / Citrus	Giant Swallowtail, Two-tailed Swallowtail, Tiger Swallowtail
Hackberry	Question Mark, American Snout, Emperors
Spicebush	Spicebush Swallowtail
Sennas / Partridge Pea	Sulphurs
Fennel, Dill, Parsley	Black Swallowtail
Wisteria	Silver-spotted Skipper, White-striped Longtail
Sunflowers / Daisies / Ragweed	Bordered Patch, Silvery Checkerspot
Flame Acanthus	Crimson Patch
Dalea	Blues
Wild Mustards / Peppergrass	Checkered White, Falcate Orangetip
Crotons	Leafwings
Frogfruit	Phaon Crescent
Cenizo	Theona Checkerspot
Nettle	Red Admiral, Common Mestra
Toadflax	Common Buckeye
Mistletoe	Great Purple Hairstreak
Juniper	Juniper Hairstreak
Redbud	Henry's Elfin
Velvetleaf Mallow	Texas Powdered-skipper
Thistles	Painted Lady
Grasses	Satyrs, Common Wood-nymph, many Skippers

Reference Books:

[Butterflies of North America](#) by Brock & Kaufman (easiest to use in-depth butterfly book)

[Butterflies of Central Texas](#) by Valerie Bugh (pocket guide for quick identification of local species)

[Caterpillars in the Field and Garden](#) by Allen, Brock & Glassberg (covers all butterfly caterpillars)

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