

Butterfly Host Plants for Residential Lawns

This chart is based on True Butterflies that have been sighted in our tri-county area, Morgan, Madison, and Limestone Counties. I have made every effort to be as accurate as possible. There is a lot of conflicting information on the web and in published materials. Elizabeth “Betty” Patterson

Ornamental Plants

Common Name Botanical Name	Host Plant For	Annual or Perennial	Native	Light	Soil	Height/Width	Bloom Time
Aster (<i>Symphyotrichum spp.</i>)	Pearl Crescent Silvery Checkerspot Painted Lady	Perennial	yes	Full Sun to part shade depends on variety	depends on variety: most – Fertile, well drained	depends on variety: 1’-5’ /12”-24”	Fall till Frost (most varieties)
Aster Aromatic Aster (<i>S. oblongifolium</i>)	Silvery Checkerspot	Perennial	Yes	Full Sun	Average, dry to medium moisture Sandy, loam or clay	2 feet tall 16 inches wide	Lavender or Pink
Aster Blue Wood Aster (<i>S. cordifolium</i>)	Pearl Crescent Silvery Checkerspot	Perennial	Yes	Full Sun to part shade	Average, dry to medium moisture Sandy, loam or clay	2 to 5 feet tall 24 inches wide	Summer to late Fall Blue to White Blooms
Aster Heath Aster (<i>S. ericoides</i>):	Pearl Crescent	Perennial	Yes	Full Sun to part shade	Average to dry soil Well-drained Sandy, loam or chalk	1 to 3 feet tall 18 inches wide	Aug – Oct. White. Pink. Yellow. Blue
Aster New England Asters (<i>S. novae-angliae</i>)	Pearl Crescent Silvery Checkerspot	Perennial	Yes	Full Sun to part shade	Moist, well-drained Wide range of soil types	3 to 6 feet tall 2 to 3 feet wide	Aug. to frost from Magenta to deep Purple
Aster New York Asters (<i>S. novi-belgii</i>)	Pearl Crescent Silvery Checkerspot	Perennial	Yes	Full Sun to part shade	Average soil moisture Well-drained Chalk, Clay, Loam, Sand	Height depends on soil, up to 6 feet tall, 1 – 3 feet wide	Summer to frost from bright Pink to Bluish- purple
Aster Wavy-leaved Aster (<i>S. undulatum</i>)	Pearl Crescent	Perennial	Yes	Part Sun to part shade	Prefers dry, open areas	1 to 3 feet high	Aug to Nov. White and Pink
Bottlebrush Grass (<i>Hystrix patula</i>)	Northern Pearly Eye	Perennial	yes	Part shade	sand or loam in dry to medium moist soil	2-5 feet	Summer Jun. – Aug. Straw color
Brown-eyed Susan	Silvery Checkerspot	Perennial	Yes	Full Sun	average to moist	2 to 5 feet / 2	Mid-summer

<i>(Rudbeckia Triloba)</i>					soils with compost.	feet	– fall Yellow w/
Butterfly Weed <i>(Asclepias tuberosa)</i>	Monarch	Perennial	Yes	Full Sun	Moist well drained, tolerates most soils, prefers sandy, mild acidity	1 – 2 feet by 18 inches	Summer Orange or yellow
Carrot Family <i>(Apiaceae)</i> [Carrots, Dill, Fennel and Parsely]	Black Swallowtail	Annuals	N/A	Full Sun	Fertile, well-drained	Varies	Varies
Common Milkweed	Monarch	Perennial	Yes	Full Sun to Part Shade	Any soil	2 to 4 feet	Summer Pink
Crucifer <i>(Bassicaceae)</i> [Cabbage, Mustard, Cauliflower, Radish, Turnips, Brussel Sprouts and Broccoli]	White Cabbage	Annuals	N/A	Full Sun	Fertile, Well-drained	Varies	Varies
Cutleaf Toothwort <i>(Cardamine concatenate)</i>	Falcate Orangetip	Perennial	Yes	Dappled sun as under trees	rich, moist soils with decaying leaves	3 – 12 inches tall,	Spring fragrant, white to pink flowers
False Nettle <i>(Boehmeria cylindrica)</i>	Red Admiral, Eastern Comma, Question Mark	Perennial	Yes	Full sun to part shade	Wet to moist	2 – 4 feet	Summer, insignificant
Frog Fruit <i>(Lippia nodiflora)</i>	Common Buckeye	Perennial Evergreen in warm climates	yes	Part shade to full sun	Wet to moist, but will adjust to dryer soil	6 to 8 inches, Groundcover	Spring – fall Nectar flower
Gerardia <i>(Agalinis)</i>	Common Buckeye	Annual, Will reseed	Yes	Full sun to part shade	Medium moisture, well drained	20 inches	Fall
Goatweed <i>(Croton Capitatus, C. linearis, C. monanthogynus)</i>	Goatweed Leafwing	Annual	Yes	Full Sun to Part Shade	Moist Soil	1 to 3 feet	Summer Insignificant. Doves like the seeds
Golden Alexanders, <i>(Zizia aurea)</i>	Black Swallowtail	Perennial	Yes	Full Sun to Partial Shade	Clay, Loam, Sand Medium Dry to Medium Moist	1 to 3 Feet tall	Yellow, Late Spring to Early Summer
Grasses <i>(Poaceae)</i>	Common Wood Nymph, Gemmed Satyr,	Grasses list as host plants for Common Wood Nymph Butterfly are: Bluegrass (Poa spp.), Beardgrass (Bothriochloa), Bluestem (Andropogon), Oat Grass (Chasmanthium latifolium),					

	Little Wood Satyr, Carolina Satyr, Northern Pearl Eye	Tall Red-top Grass (<i>Tridens flavus</i>), and Purple-top (<i>Tridens flavus cupreus</i>). Grasses listed as host plants for Gemmed Satyr Butterfly are: In Alabama – Bermuda Grass Various grasses through the range are host plants for Carolina Satyr Butterfly Grasses listed as host plants for Little Wood Satyr Butterfly are: “Varies species of grasses, and possibly sedges”. Grasses listed as host plants for Northern Pearly Eye Butterfly are: Panic grasses (<i>Panicum</i> spp.), Long-awned Wood grass (<i>Brachytrium erectum</i>), Bottlebrush Grass* (<i>Hystrix patula</i>), Plumegrass (<i>Erianthus alopecuroides</i>).					
Hollyhock (<i>Alcea</i>)	Painted Lady	Biennial Perennial	No	Full Sun to Partial Shade	Rich Moist Soil	4 to 9 feet	Summer
Ironweed (<i>Vernonia fasciculata</i>)	American Lady	Perennial	Yes	Full Sun to Partial Shade	Moist Clay, Loam, Sand	5 feet tall	Purple Aug., Sept.
Nasturtium (<i>Nasturtium tropaeolum majus</i>)	Cabbage White	Annual	No	Best in Full Sun	Moist, most types of soil. Do not Fertilize.	8 inches, spread depends on verity	Summer til frost with deadheading.
Partridge Pea (<i>Chamaecrista fasciculata</i>)	Little Yellow, Sleepy Orange, Cloudless Sulphur	Annual	yes	Full Sun to Part Shade	Moist to Dry, not picky about soil	1 to 3 feet	Summer till frost
Pearly Everlasting (<i>Anaphalis margaritacea</i>)	American Lady	Perennial	yes	Full Sun, will tolerate some shade	dry, even rocky or poor soil conditions	3 feet	Summer to Fall
Plumegrass (<i>Erianthus alopecuroides</i>)	Northern Pearly Eye						
Pussytoes (<i>Antennaria plantaginifolia</i>)	American Lady	Perennial		Full Sun to Part Shade	Clay, Gravel, Loam, Sand Med.; Med. Dry; Dry	6 to 12 inches	Apr thru Jun Grown for leaf texture not the bloom
Rue (<i>Ruta graveolens</i>)	Black Swallowtail, Giant Swallowtail	Perennial	No	Full Sun, can take afternoon shade	Any soil that is well drained	2 to 3 feet	insignifcant
Snapdragon (<i>Antirrhinum majus</i>)	Common Buckeye	Tender Perennial	No	Full Sun	Sandy, Loam, Clay Prefers well drained	6 to 20 inches	Spring and again in Fall
Swamp Milkweed	Monarch	Perennial	Yes	Full Sun to Part Shade	Moist to wet soil	3 to 5 feet	Summer Pink
Violets (<i>Viola spp.</i>)	Variegated Fritillary, Great Spangled Fritillary	Perennial	Yes	Morning Sun, afternoon shade	Moist, well drained	There are hundreds of species therefore many sizes and bloom times	

Vines

Common Name Botanical Name	Host Plant For	Annual or Perennial	Native	Light	Soil	Height/Width	Bloom Time
Dutchman's Pipevine (<i>Aristolochia macrophylla</i>)	Pipevine Swallowtail	Perennial Dies back in winter	yes	full sun to part shade	Prefers fertile, moist, well-drained soil.	20 to 30 feet	
Passion-flower (<i>Passiflora incarnata</i> L.)	Gulf Fritillary Variegated Fritillary	Perennial	yes	Full Sun to Part Shade	Not picky about soil. Plant in a pot to control.	25 feet	April to September

Scrubs

Common Name Botanical Name	Host Plant For	Deciduous Evergreen	Native	Light/Soil	Comments	Height/Width	Bloom Time
Blueberry (<i>Vaccinium</i>)	Striped Hairstreak	Deciduous	yes	Full Sun	needs cross-pollination to set fruit. pH between 4.5 to 5.2	Prune to size	Spring
Lead Plant (<i>Amorpha canescens</i>)	Southern Dogface	Diesback in winter	yes	Full Sun, will tolerate part shade.	medium to very dry sandy, gravel, loam, and clay.	3 feet	Summer Purple
PawPaw <i>See Trees</i>							
Spicebush (<i>Lindera benain</i>)	Spicebush Swallowtail Eastern Tiger Swallowtail	Deciduous	Yes	Full Sun to Partial Shade	The berries and leaves have a pleasant fragrance when crushed. Is dioecious, male and female plants needed to produce berries.	6 to 12 Feet Tall and Wide	Spring
Sumac, Smooth (<i>Rhus glabra</i>)	Red-banded Hairstreak	Deciduous	Yes	Sand, Loam, Clay Dry to Medium Moisture	The fruits persist long into winter and many birds and other wildlife rely on them for food.	8 to 15 Feet	May to July
Wild Senna (<i>Senna hebecarpa</i>)	Cloudless Sulphur, Sleepy Orange	Perennial	Yes	Full Sun to Partial Shade	Fond of Clay. Will thrive in medium to moist soils and tolerates periodic flooding	4 to 6 Feet	Yellow Flowers July and August

TREES

Common Name Botanical Name	Host Plant For	Deciduous Evergreen	Native	Comments	Height/Width	Bloom Time
Black Cherry (<i>Prunus serotina</i>)	Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Striped Hairstreak, Red- Spotted Purple, Viceroy	Deciduous	yes	can be weedy or invasive	60 – 80 Feet	Spring Pink blooms
Cottonwood (<i>Populus deltoids</i>)	Red-spotted Purple, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Mourning Cloak, Viceroy	Deciduous	Yes	Can be a problem for residential areas because of size and weak wood.	>100 feet high 75 feet wide	N/A
Eastern Red Cedar (<i>Juniperus virginiana</i> L.)	Juniper Hairstreak	Evergreen	yes	Red Cedar can be injurious to apple orchards because it is an alternate host for cedar-apple rust, a fungal disease.	30-40 feet +	
Hackberry (<i>Celtis occidentales</i>)	American Snout, Hackberry Emperor, Tawny Emperor, Question Mark, Mourning Cloak	Deciduous	yes	Full Sun, does well in acidic, alkaline, loamy, moist, rich, sandy, well- drained, wet and clay soils Classified as “One tough tree”	40 – 60 feet by 40-60 feet A fast grower	Bloom is insignificant. Birds love the berries.
Magnolia Trees (<i>Magnoliaceae</i>)	Eastern Tiger Swallowtail	Evergreen		The fruit of the southern magnolia is eaten by squirrels, rabbits and birds—including wild turkey. Flowers are very fragrant, blooming white, pink, red, purple or yellow depending on variety.	Depends on variety	May and June
PawPaw (<i>Asimina triloba</i>)	Zebra Swallowtail	Deciduous	yes	The tree commonly grows in floodplains and shady, rich bottomlands, where it often forms a dense, clonally spreading undergrowth in the forest, often appearing as a patch or thicket of individual small slender trees.	35 to 45 feet	March to May
Pine Trees (<i>Genus</i>)	Eastern Pine Elfin	Evergreen	Yes	This tree prefers well-drained loam or clay, but will also grow on very poor, sandy soil, where it remains small and stunted. The typical life span is 65 to 90 years.	98 to 115 feet normally, but can grow taller	N/A
Redbud Tree (<i>Cercis canadensis</i>)	Henry’s Elfin	Deciduous	yes	This tree is not picky about soil, but it does best when grown in a moist, well-	20 to 30 feet tall and 25 to	Early Spring

				drained location. Work well as understory trees and are particularly stunning when planted in groupings. The horizontal branching pattern adds architectural interest to the garden and makes an attractive canopy for spring bulbs.	35 feet wide.	
Sassafras (<i>Sassafras albidum</i>)	Spicebush Swallowtail	Deciduous	Yes	A captivating native tree known for it's brilliant of autumn foliage and aromatic smell.	45 to 50 Feet Tall	Yellow Flowers in Spring
Sourwood (<i>Oxydendrum arboretum</i>)	Summer Azure	Deciduous	Yes	Flowers look like Lily of the Valley flowers and are very fragrant and look beautiful against the dark green leaves of the tree.	25 to 30 Feet Tall and 20 Feet Wide	White Late June to Early July
Willows (<i>Salix</i>)	Striped Hairstreak, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Viceroy, Red-spotted Purple; Mourning Cloak (Blk & Weeping Willows only)	Deciduous	Yes	Willow trees and shrubs are bought for their ornamental beauty. They are great shade trees and are useful for controlling erosion and timber. This is a fast growing tree that tolerates a variety of soil types.	15 to 70 Feet Tall and 12 to 70 Feet Wide.	N/A

Wild and Agricultural Plants

Common Name Botanical Name	Host Plant For	Annual or Perennial	Native	Light	Soil	Height/Width	Bloom Time
Alfalfa (<i>Medicago sativa.</i>)	Orange Sulphur, Southern Dogface	Perennial	No	Perennial flowering plant in the legume family Fabaceae. Alfalfa is used as hay, it is usually cut and baled.			
Cane, Giant (<i>Arundinaria gigantea</i>)	Southern Pearly Eye	Perennial, Evergreen	yes	Full Sun to Partial Shade	Swamp conditions	3 to 25 feet tall	Spring, early Feb. thru May
Clover (<i>Trifolium</i>)	Eastern Tailed-blue, Southern Dogface	Varies	Varies	Varies	Varies	Varies	Varies
False Indigo Bush (<i>Amorpha fruticose</i>)	Southern Dogface	Perennial	yes	Not generally used in landscaping as it can be leggy in appearance and tends to be invasive. If you have the space, put this plant along a creek bed as it likes soil that is wet to moist. Growing from 4 to 12 feet high and 6 to 15 feet wide, this Amorpha blooms late spring to early summer.			

Mistletoes <i>(Phoradendron sp.)</i>	Great Purple Hairstreak	Perennial Evergreen	No	Misteltoe attaches to their host tree or shrub and extract water and nutrients from the host plant. Great Purple Hairstreak larva eat the red male berries.			
Nettles <i>(Urtica spp.)</i>	Eastern Comma, Question Mark, Red Admiral	Nettles are considered weeds due to their rapid growth and soil coverage. However, there are economic and ecological reasons for cultivating stinging nettles. According to Dreyer and Müssing, nettles can improve soils over-fertilized with nitrogen and phosphate. They can also promote the biodiversity of local flora and fauna. Over 40 species of insect are supported by nettles.					
Queen Ann’s Lace <i>(Daucus carota)</i>	Black Swallowtail	Biennial	No	Full Sun to Partial Shade	Not picky, but does like good drainage This plant is invasive. If you do decide to grow it, deadhead to prevent	1 to 4 feet tall	Second year Spring thru Fall
Sheperd’s Purse <i>(Capsella bursa- pastoris)</i>	Checkered White Falcate Orangetip	Not Native	Shepherd’s Purse is a quick-growing, short-lived weed. One plant can produce hundreds of seeds which compound the problem. Its lifecycle is approximately three to four weeks from germination to setting seed.				
Thistle, Yellow <i>(Cirsium horridulum)</i>	Little Metalmark (All thistles – Painted Lady)						
Vetch <i>(Vicia caroliniana)</i>	Silvery Blue	Perennial Deciduous	Yes	Full Sun to Partial Shade	Dry Soil	2 ½ Ft. will sprawl or climb	