

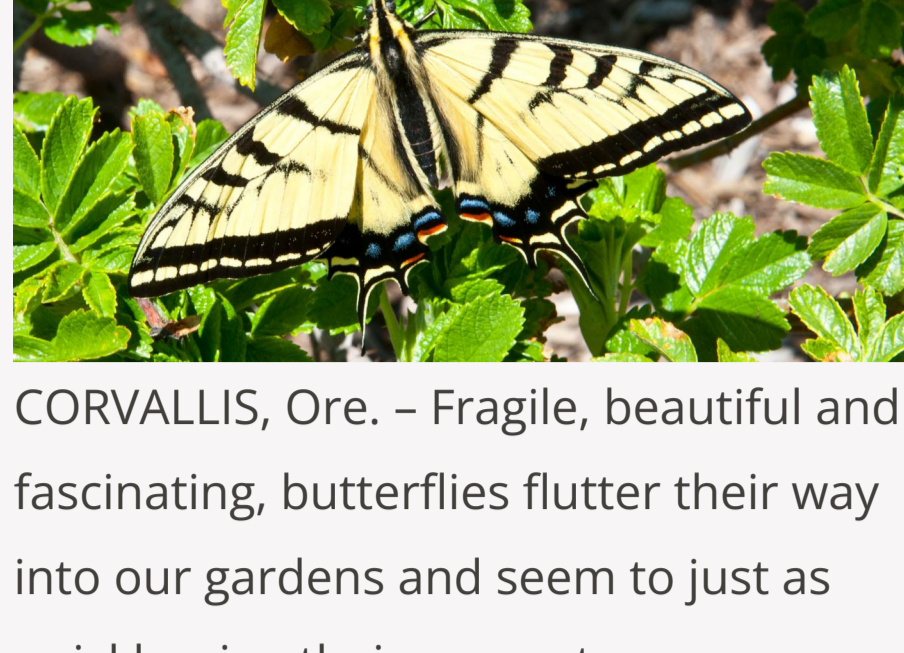


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# Butterflies wing their way into the garden with the proper room and board



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CORVALLIS, Ore. – Fragile, beautiful and fascinating, butterflies flutter their way into our gardens and seem to just as quickly wing their way out.

It isn't because they necessarily want to leave, said Heather Stoven, an entomologist with the Oregon State University Extension Service. Rather they don't find what they need to park themselves permanently.

As detailed in Extension's publication "[The Wildlife Garden: How to Create a Butterfly Garden](#)," butterflies require specific room and board to have their needs met. As with all wildlife, shelter, water and food are a given, but for butterflies, the range of repast is more limited.

When butterflies change from egg to larvae, or caterpillar, they come out ravenous and with chewing mouthparts, two things that set them up to damage plants, a condition gardeners must tolerate or forgo butterflies except in the most ephemeral way.

Fortunately for the gardener – not at all fortunate for the butterfly – only a few plants qualify as nutrition for the caterpillar, sometimes just one. These host plants must be present, Stoven pointed out, or the caterpillars starve to death. (See below for some common butterflies and their preferences.)

"If you see a weird worm creeping along one of your plants, don't kill it until you have identified it," she said. "It may well be a butterfly caterpillar, maybe a rare one that you didn't expect."

To identify the caterpillar take it to your [county Extension office](#) where a master gardener will help. Call first to see if the office is open. Or snap a good photo and submit it along with your question to [Ask Extension](#).

In addition to adding host plants – and tolerating the caterpillars' nibbling – you'll need to plant some of the nectar plants favored by adults. Many of these – zinnias, various daisies, asters, goldenrod and milkweed – may already have a place in the garden. Since butterflies are nearsighted, Stoven said, it's best to plant one color of one species in a swath; a block of blue asters for swallowtails or a yellow moon of goldenrod for red admirals.

Fragrance plays a part, too, so don't forget the sweet smells of lavender, mint, sweet William and honeysuckle. Around the nectar and host plants, it's important to provide taller plants to act as protection from wind. During winter, shelter becomes more important for hibernating adults and caterpillars, who like to live in crevices in trees, walls, under mulch or leaf litter, even in empty sheds.

And somewhere there must be a sunny spot for the butterflies to warm their blood. They rarely take flight when temperatures are below 60 degrees, Stoven said. Water, too, is essential. Design a butterfly puddle by sinking a shallow dish right up to the lip in the ground and fill it almost to the top with wet sand, which they'll sip from.

And the usual reminder: Using chemicals in the garden is counterproductive when trying to attract wildlife.

Though the focus recently is on the monarch, Stoven noted that not much is known about the western monarch and its migration, which could be why not many are seen on the west side of the Cascades. That doesn't make planting native milkweed, monarchs' only host plant, any less important.

"It certainly doesn't hurt to plant milkweed just in case," she said. "But it makes more sense to plant it for other types of butterflies that are native to this area as well."

Here's a partial list of butterflies seen this time of year and their hosts and nectar plants:

- Western tiger swallowtail. Host plants: big-leaf maple, willow, aspen, cottonwood. Nectar plants: common lilac, rhododendron, honeysuckle, milkweed, mock orange, sweet William, lavender, verbena, asters
- Pale swallowtail. Host plants: buckbrush, cherry, plum, hawthorn, cascara, oceanspray. Nectar plants: oceanspray, columbine, garden mint, thistle, blackberry, penstemon, sweet William, asters
- Pure white. Host plants: pine, Douglas-fir, true fir, hemlock, redcedar. Nectar plants: dusty miller, daisies, coreopsis, lobelia, goldenrod, strawflower
- Red admiral. Host plant: stinging nettle. Nectar plants: daisy, aster, thistle, dandelion, goldenrod, milkweed, fireweed
- Painted lady. Host plants: mostly thistle, sunflower, pearly everlasting, hollyhock. Nectar plants: Oregon grape, rabbitbrush, zinnia, dandelion, aster, cosmos, milkweed, purple coneflower
- Great spangled fritillary. Host plant: violet. Nectar plants: gloriosa daisy, thistle, verbena, milkweed
- Monarch. Host plant: milkweed. Nectar plants: milkweed, lantana, lilac, cosmos, goldenrod, zinnia
- Woodland skipper. Host plant: grasses. Nectar plants: bluebeard, lavender, oxeye daisy, garden sage, pearly everlasting, black-eyed Susan, aster

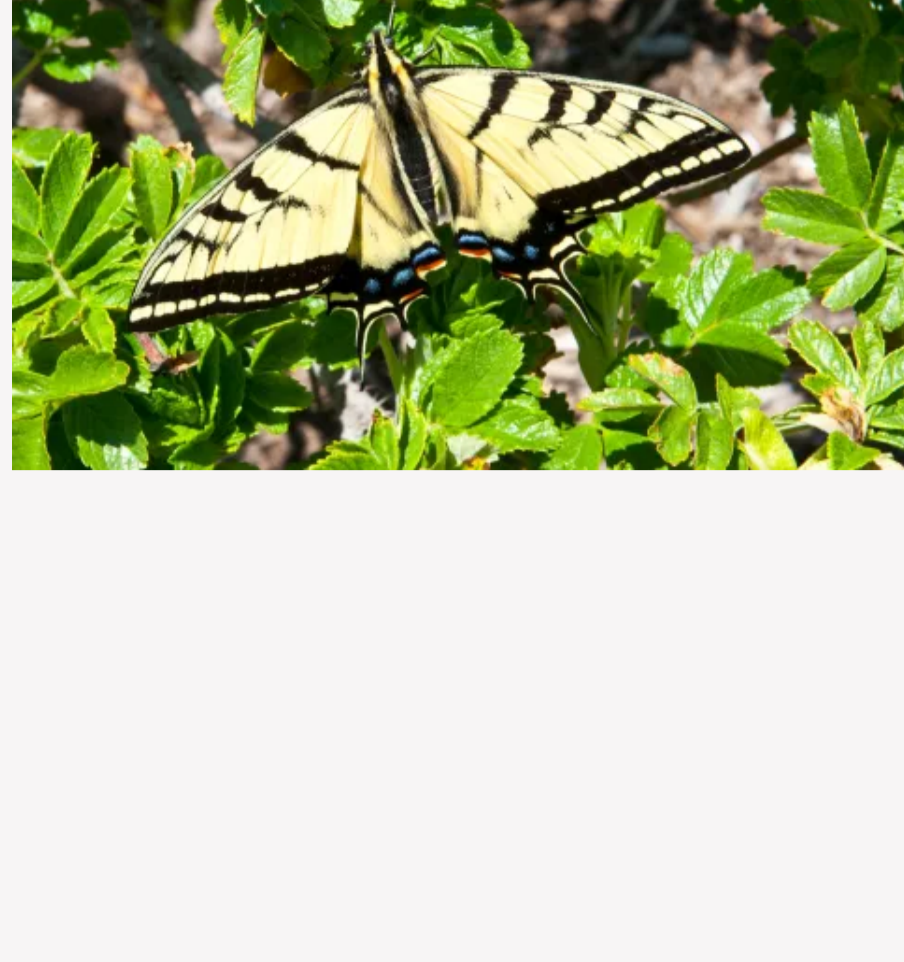
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### Multimedia



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