

Plants that Attract Butterflies

To attract butterflies it is important to have two types of plants growing in your yard or your general area:

1) food plants for the larvae (caterpillars), and 2) nectar plants for adult butterflies.

The most important plants for caterpillars are buckwheat, California lilac (*Ceanothus*), deerweed and milk vetch and lupines, mallows, oaks, rock cress and other mustards, and grasses. Unless you provide larval food plants in your garden or nearby, the number of adult butterflies will be limited.

The butterflies of San Luis Obispo County are listed below, with the host/food plant of the caterpillar. In most cases food of the adult butterfly is also given, that is, the nectar plant. Adults may use the host plant or not. They generally visit many flowers, not just these reported ones.

Bold letters = common. Groups and species are in alphabetical order, not taxonomic. Nearly all the plants given are California natives.

ADMIRALS	California sister. Coast & canyon live oak. Adults use rotting fruit, dung, sap; rarely flowers. Lorquin's admiral. Willows, cottonwoods, chokecherry. Adults: buckeye, yerba santa, Calif. lilac, mint, sap, fruit, dung. Red admiral. Nettles, eg hoary; pellitory. Adults: sap, rotting fruit; composites, bur marigold, milkweed, stonecrop, mint.
BLUES	Acmon blue. Buckwheats; legumes: deerweed, lupine, Spanish lotus, milk vetch, clover; milkweed. Adults: rabbitbrush, coyote brush, marsh baccharis, heliotrope, buckwheat. Arrowhead blue. Lupines (eg bush), milk vetch. Adults: hosts; also buckwheat, yerba santa, mint, vetch, dogbane. Bernardino blue. Buckwheats, eg Calif., sulfur, coast. Adults: same. Our square-spotted blues are here (Opler database). Boisduval's blue. Lupines, buckwheat. Adults use buckwheat too, and composites. Lupine blue. California, sulfur, and other buckwheats. Adults use the host plants, and pussy paws. Marine blue. Legumes: milk vetch, clover, wild pea, deerweed; leadwort. Adults: wild licorice, probably other hosts. Pacific dotted blue. Buckwheats: sulfur, nude, & inflated. Adults use them too. San Emigdio blue. 4-wing saltbush. Nectar: heliotrope. Silvery blue. Legumes: lupines, vetches, wild pea, milk vetch, lotus, deerweed. Adults: composites, lupine, fiddleneck. Sonoran blue. Dudleya. Adults: fiddleneck, brodiaea. Bramble green hairstreak Bill Bouton Spring azure (echo). Dogwood, oaks, Chinese houses, Calif. lilac, buckeye, Calif. aster. Adults: Calif. lilac, rock cress, milkweed, willow, violet. Western pygmy blue. Saltbush (eg 4-wing, quailbush, spear oracle), sea blite, pickleweed, pigweed. Nectar: coyote brush, rabbitbrush, golden rod, aster. Western tailed blue. Legumes like milk vetch, lotus, vetch (eg giant), wild pea. Adults: host plants, and buckwheat, pussy paws, yerba santa, composites, dogbane.
BUCKEYE	Common buckeye. Plantains, snapdragon, monkey flower, owl's clover; blue toadflax, verbena, pine. Adults: coreopsis, aster, rabbitbrush, coyote brush; mint, buckwheat, plantain, heliotrope, buckeye, sage, marsh baccharis.
CHECKERSPOTS	Edith's checkerspot. Many in the figwort family, eg paintbrush; valerian, honeysuckle, plantain (<i>Plantago erecta</i>). Adults: pincushion, yerba santa, milkweed. Gabb's checkerspot. California aster, telegraph weed, sawtooth goldenbush. Leanira checkerspot. Paintbrush, bird's beak. Nectar: yellow composites, nude buckwheat, coyote

	mint, yerba santa.
	Variable checkerspot. Paintbrush, beardtongue, sticky monkey flower, Calif. figwort; snowberry, others. Nectar: yerba santa, buckwheat, globe gilia, daisy, mint, many others.
COMMAS (ANGLEWINGS)	Oreas comma. Straggly gooseberry. Adults take sap.
COPPERS	Satyr comma. Nettles, eg hoary nettle. Adults: sap, fruit. Gorgon copper. Long-stem, nude buckwheats. Adults: host plants, and woolly sunflower, milkweed. Great copper. Docks, eg wild rhubarb. Nectar: gumplant, heliotrope, dogbane, white umbels. Purplish copper. Docks, knotweeds like willow weed, smartweed; cinquefoils, horkelia. Adults: heliotrope, aster, coyote brush. Tailed copper. Gooseberries, currants. Adults use composites, asters, nude buckwheat.
CRESCENTS	Mylytta crescent. Thistles. Adults use asters, thistles, rabbitbrush, buckwheats, yerba santa, heliotrope.
DUSKYWINGS, CLOUDY- AND SOOTYWINGS	Common sooty wing. Pigweed, amaranth, mallow, ambrosia. Adults use milkweed, heliotrope, clover. Funereal dusky-wing. Many legumes, eg deerweed. Adults use sunflowers, buckwheat, yerba santa. Mojave sooty-wing. Saltbush, eg 4 wing. Mournful dusky-wing. Oaks: live, blue, valley. Adults: yerba santa, buckeye, verbena, buckwheats, sage, mint. Northern cloudy-wing. Legumes like milk vetch, clover, lotus, false indigo, vetch. Adults use mints, vetches, thistles, milkweed, dogbane, yerba santa, brodiaea, buckeye. Pacuvius dusky-wing. Calif. lilac, eg buck brush & Jim brush. Adults use the same, and yellow composites. Propertius dusky-wing. Oaks, eg coast live and Oregon. Adults use blue dicks, yerba santa, Calif. lilac, vetches, phacelia, fiddleneck, buckeye, dogbane. Sleepy dusky-wing. Oaks, especially leather. Adults use verbena, redbud, heaths, composites, wild onions.
FRITILLARIES	Callippe fritillary. Violets. Adults take nectar from yerba santa, buckwheat, coyote mint, sage. Coronis fritillary. Violets. Adults use aster, rabbitbrush, goldenrod, thistle; yerba santa, mint, buckeye, sage. Gulf fritillary. Passion vines (alien). Adults use daisies, thistles.
HAIRSTREAKS	Bramble green hairstreak (western green). Buckwheats, legumes like deer weed; Calif. lilac. Nectar: yerba santa, Calif. buckwheat, buckeye, dogbane. Brown elfin. Manzanita, buck brush, madrone, salal, soap plant, dodder, many others. Adults use Calif. buckwheat, willow, redbud, yerba santa. California hairstreak. Oaks mainly; also buck brush, mountain mahogany, deer brush. Nectar: yerba santa, milkweed, dogbane, buckwheat. Gold-hunter's hairstreak. Oaks, esp. blue and scrub; also interior live. Nectar: buckeye, buckwheat (eg nude), dogbane, milkweed, yerba santa. Golden hairstreak. Canyon live oak, chinquapin, tan oak. No flower nectar taken; food unknown. Gray hairstreak. Legumes, mallows, buckwheats, chamise, many others. Adults visit numerous flowers. Great purple hairstreak. Mistletoe. Adults: buckwheat, umbels, composites, buckeye, milkweed. Hedgerow hairstreak. Calif. lilacs, esp. buck brush; mountain mahogany. Adults use the same, plus buckwheat, dogbane, yerba santa. Juniper hairstreak (siva). California juniper. Adults: goldenbush, yarrow, buckwheat (eg sulfur), tansy mustard, milkweed. Moss's elfin. Stonecrop, dudleya. Mountain mahogany hairstreak. Mountain mahogany. Nectar: Calif. buckwheat, yerba santa, milkweed. Muir's hairstreak. Sargeant cypress. Adults: Calif. lilac. Sylvan hairstreak. Willows. Adults use milkweed. Thicket hairstreak. Pine mistletoe. Adults use rabbitbrush.
LADIES	American lady. Everlastings, pussy-toes. Nectar: yerba santa, thistles, marsh baccharis, aster, buckwheat, milkweed. Painted lady. Thistles, mallows, legumes, nettle, borages (eg fiddleneck). Nectar: composites (eg aster, thistles), buckwheat, yerba santa, mint, borages, lobelia.

	West Coast lady. Mallows (eg checker mallow, island mallow), nettles. Nectar: thistles, yerba santa, buckwheat, mallow, mint, sage, milkweed.
MARBLES	California marble (pearly). Mustards like jewelflower, tansy mustard, rock cress. Adults use the same, plus pussy paws. Large marble. Mustards like rock cress (eg tower mustard), wall flower, tansy mustard. Adults: mustards, fiddleneck, brodiaea.
METALMARKS	Behr's metalmark. Calif. buckwheat. Adults: buckwheat. Mormon metalmark. Buckwheats like Calif., inflated, coast, and nude. Adults: buckwheats; also aster, senecio, rabbitbrush.
MILKWEEDS /MONARCH ORANGETIPS	Monarch. Milkweed. Adults: mint, milkweed, composites (eg sunflower, mulefat), manzanita, mallow. Queen. Milkweed. Nectar: sunflowers, milkweed. Desert orangetip. Mustards like tansy mustard, rock cress, jewelflower, desert candle. Pacific (Sara) orangetip. Mustards, eg tower mustard, tansy mustard, lace pod. Adults: host plants, plus thistle, fiddleneck, brodiaea, buckeye, blue dicks, yerba santa.
SATYRS	Common ringlet. Grasses like perennial fescue (maybe red or Calif.) Adults use flowers. Great Basin wood nymph. Grasses like perennial fescue (maybe red or Calif.) Adults use composites, buckeye, Calif. and nude buckwheat.
SKIPPER	Columbian skipper. Junegrass, oatgrass. Adults use rabbitbrush, goldenrod. Common checkered-skipper. Monterey Co., maybe here. Mallows. Adults use aster, fleabane, rabbitbrush. Eufala skipper. Grasses like bermuda. Nectar: vetch, composites, croton, heliotrope. Fiery skipper. Bermuda grass, crabgrass, others. Nectar: composites, verbena. Lindsey's skipper. Native grasses like fescue, oatgrass. Adults visit clarkia, mule ears. Northern white-skipper. Mallows like bush mallow. Adults use lobelia, yerba santa, composites, mints, buckwheat. Rural skipper. Grasses like melic; horkelia. Adults: buckeye. Sachem. Bermuda grass, crabgrass. Adults: milkweed, verbena; rabbitbrush, sunflower, thistle, coyote brush. Sandhill skipper. Grasses like saltgrass, bermuda. Adults use aster, heliotrope. Silver-spotted skipper. Legumes: locust, wild licorice, false indigo, lotus. Nectar: honeysuckle, milkweed, thistle, yerba santa, vetch, buckeye, dogbane. Small checkered-skipper. Mallows like alkali mallow. Adults: mints, milkweed, composites, heliotrope. Two-banded checkered-skipper. Horkelia, cinquefoil. Adults use pussy paws. Umbur skipper. Grasses, eg hairgrass; sedge. Adults use thistles, coyote brush, yerba santa, milkweed, buckeye. Western branded skipper. Grasses, eg bluegrass, needlegrass, fescue; sedges. Adults use asters, thistles, mint, buckwheat, yerba santa. White checkered-skipper. Mallows like alkali mallow. Woodland skipper. Tall broad-leaf grasses, eg wild rye. Adults use asters, thistles, everlasting, rabbitbrush, coyote brush, dogbane.
SULFURS	California dogface. False indigo, other legumes. Adults: yerba santa, buckeye, thistle, verbena, woolly blue curls, sage, mint, hedge nettle, Calif. fuchsia. Cloudless sulphur. Senna. Nectar: thistle, morning glory. Harford's sulfur. Douglas milkvetch, deerweed, lupine. Nectar plants: thistle, mint. Orange sulfur (alfalfa). Legumes: vetches, clovers, milk vetch, deerweed. Adults use milkweed, aster. Southern dogface. Legumes, eg clovers, false indigo. Adults use coreopsis, verbena. Sleepy orange. Sennas. Adults use bur marigold, daisies. Anise swallowtail. Umbels, eg anise (non-native), <i>Tauschia</i> , <i>Lomatium</i> . Adults visit a vast array of flowers. Pale swallowtail. Rose family, eg holly-leaf cherry; buckthorns, eg redberry, coffeeberry, Calif. lilac (eg buck brush). Adults: wallflower, yerba santa, thistle, mint, lilies, Ithuriel's spear, blue dicks. Western tiger swallowtail. Cottonwood, willow, sycamore, ash, alder trees. Nectar: composites, lilies, thistles, yerba santa, milkweed, coyote mint, buckeye, dogbane, lobelia, sage.
TORTOISESHELLS	California tortoiseshell. Calif. lilacs, eg buck brush, blue blossom. Adults: flowers (eg manzanita), fruit,

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sap.
 Milbert's tortoiseshell. Nettles. Adults: fruit, thistle, daisies, rabbitbrush, aster, coyote mint, chokecherry.
Mourning cloak. Willows, cottonwoods. Adults: oak sap, fruit, willow, composites, rabbitbrush.
 Becker's white. Mustards, eg prince's plume; bladderpod. Nectar: mustards, rabbitbrush, aster, goldenrod.
Cabbage white. Non-native. Many mustards, eg crows. Adults use mustards, mint, composites.
Checkered white. Many mustards, eg peppergrass. Nectar: mustards, composites, aster, daisy, milkweed, legumes.
 Margined white. Mustards, eg toothwort, rock cress, water cress. Adults use mustards.
Spring white. Mustards, eg rock cress, jewel flower, tansy mustard, lace pod. Adults use a variety of flowers.

TOTALS: 99 species (49 common)

GARDENING TIPS

Butterflies like:

- big patches of flowers and color
- sunny places without wind
- wet places for "puddling"
- weedy areas

Insecticides and herbicides are very harmful.

IMPORTANT NECTAR PLANTS (adapted from lists by Las Pilitas Nursery and Paul Opler)

In order to have adult butterflies in your garden for the longest period of time (spring to fall) you must have plants flowering continuously. Thus the nectar plants below are very important. They are given in approximate order of flowering time, beginning with March. You may have to revise these for your own place, according to zone, soil, etc.

Globe gilia. *Gilia capitata*.

Pincushion. *Chaenactis*, eg *glabriuscula*.

Seaside daisy. *Erigeron glaucus*.

Yerba santa. *Eriodictyon californicum*.

Sunflower. *Helianthus gracilentus*.

Sage. *Salvia*, eg *mellifera*, *spathacea*.

Mock orange. *Philadelphus lewisii*.

Tree anemone. *Carpenteria californica*.

Buckwheat. *Eriogonum fasciculatum*.

Mint. *Monardella*.

Hedge nettle. *Stachys*.

Saw-tooth goldenbush. *Hazardia squarrosa*.

Verbena. *Verbena lasiostachys*.

Woolly blue curls. *Trichostema lanatum*.

Thistle. *Cirsium*, eg *occidentale var venustum*.

Desert willow. *Chilopsis linearis*.

Milkweed. *Asclepias eriocarpa*, *fascicularis*.

Buckwheat. *Eriogonum elongatum*, *latifolium*, *nudum*, *roseum*.

California fuschia. *Epilobium canum*.

Rabbitbrush. *Chrysothamnus nauseosus*.

GLOSSARY, CHOICES

Aster *Aster*, eg *chilensis*. Calif. aster-- *Lessingia filaginifolia*.

Beardtongue *Penstemon*, eg *centranthifolius*, *heterophyllus*

Buck brush *Ceanothus cuneatus*

Buckwheat *Eriogonum elongatum* (long stem), *fasciculatum* (Calif.), *latifolium* (coast), *nudum* (nude), *roseum* (rosy), *trichopes* (inflated), *umbellatum* (sulfur).

California lilac *Ceanothus*, eg *cuneatus*, *griseus*, *maritimus*, *thyrsiflorus*

Composites *Asteraceae*

Daisy *Erigeron*, esp. *glaucus*, *foliosus*

Deerweed *Lotus scoparius*

Dock *Rumex hymenosepalus*, *maritimus*, or *salicifolius*

Everlasting *Anaphalis*; *Gnaphalium*, eg *californicum*, *canescens*

False indigo *Amorpha californica*

Fescue *Festuca californica*, *elmeri*, *rubra* (red)

Figwort *Scrophulariaceae*. *Scrophularia atrata* or *californica*

Fleabane *Erigeron*, eg *glaucus*, *foliosus*

Legumes *Fabaceae*, pea family

Lotus *Lotus scoparius*; and *L. purshianus* (Spanish lotus), others

Mallow *Malvaceae*. *Eremalche parryi*; *Lavatera* (tree mallow); *Malacothamnus jonesii*, *palmeri*, *davidsonii* (bush mallows); *Malvella leprosa* (alkali mallow); *Sidalcea diploscypha*, *malvaeflora*, *hickmanii* (checker mallows).

Milkweed *Asclepias fascicularis* (narrow leaf), *eriocarpa* (Indian)

Milk vetch *Astragalus curtipes*, *douglasii*, *macrodon*, *nuttallii*, (locoweed) *oxyphysus*, *trichopodus*

Mint *Lamiaceae*: *Agastache urticifolia*; *Mentha arvensis*; *Monardella*, eg *antonina*, *frutescens*, *palmeri*, *villosa*; *Stachys*; *Trichostema lanatum*

Mustard *Brassicaceae*

Nettle mainly *Urtica dioica*

Pigweed *Chenopodium* esp. *californicum*

Plantain *Plantago elongata*, *erecta*, *maritima*, *subnuda*

Rock cress *Arabis glabra*; also *pulchra*, *sparsiflora*

Sage *Salvia carduacea*, *leucophylla*, *mellifera*, *spathacea*

Snapdragon *Antirrhinum*, eg *kelloggii*, *multiflorum*

Soap plant *Chlorogalum pomeridianum*

Sunflower *Helianthus gracilentus*, plus annuals *annuus*, *bolanderi*

Thistle *Cirsium*, eg *brevistylum*, *occidentale*

Tower mustard *Arabis glabra*

Umbels *Apiaceae*, carrot family

Vetch *Vicia americana*, *gigantea*, *hassei*

Violet *Viola*, esp. *V. pedunculata*

Wild pea *Lathyrus jepsonii*, *vestitus*

Yerba Santa *Eriodictyon californicum*, *tomentosum*, *traskiae*

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