

Caterpillar Host Plants for some South Carolina Lowcountry Butterfly Species

All-stars (plants that support several species, are easy to grow or are almost sure to attract egg-laying adults are in bold). This is by no means a comprehensive list. There are lots of good printed and online sources for this information.

Host Plant	Butterfly Species	Notes
Angelonia (<i>Angelonia angustifolia</i>)	Common Buckeye	Also called summer snapdragon
Asters (Asters spp.)	Pearl Crescent	Also a nectar source
Bean family, including weedy legumes such as beggar's tick (<i>Desmodium</i> spp.) and hog peanut (<i>Amphicarpa bracteata</i>) and invasive exotics like kudzu (<i>Pueraria lobata</i>), and Chinese wisteria (<i>Wisteria sinensi</i>). Also will use the native wisteria (<i>W. frutescens</i>)	Long-tailed Skipper Silver-spotted Skipper	Look for flaps of leaf stitched down with silk. The larvae shelter under these flaps or, for larger larvae, several leaves stitched together.
Cannas (<i>Canna</i> spp.)—native and garden species	Brazilian Skipper	Destructive to canna, but worth it for the monstrous, transparent-skinned caterpillars rolled up in leaves.
Clovers (<i>Trifolium</i> spp.)	Orange Sulfur Clouded Sulfur Eastern Tailed-blue	
Cudweeds (<i>Gnaphalium</i> spp.) and Pearly Everlasting (<i>Anaphalis margaritacea</i>)	American Lady	If you are not obsessed about your lawn, you probably have cudweed growing there already. Just mow around it.
Frogfruit or Fogfruit (<i>Phyla nodiflora</i>)	Phaon Crescent White Peacock	A good ground cover for wet areas and ditch banks. A nectar plant for some species.
Giant Cane (<i>Arundinaria gigantea</i>)	Southern Pearly-eye Creole Pearly-eye The Roadside Skippers	A native cane growing in damp areas near creeks or swamps. Easy to encourage.
Grasses	Fiery Skipper Whirlabout Satyrs Common Wood Nymph Many other skippers	A number of satyrs may use centipede and St. Augustine grasses for host plants. One satyr and a number of skippers may use Bermuda grass.

<i>Cassia</i> or <i>Senna</i> spp. Including Sicklepod (<i>Senna obtusifolia</i>), Partridge Pea (<i>Chamaecrista fasciculata</i>)	Sleepy Orange Cloudless Sulphur Little Yellow	
Black Cherry (<i>Prunus serotina</i>)	Spring Azure Eastern Tiger Swallowtail Striped Hairstreak Red-spotted Purple	Fruit for the birds, too
Dogwood (<i>Cornus</i> spp.)	Spring Azure	ditto
Elm (<i>Ulmus</i> spp.)	Question Mark Eastern Comma Mourning Cloak	
Parsley family, including Fennel, Dill, Queen Anne's Lace and natives like Water Hemlock and Water Parsnip	Black Swallowtail	One study found that fennel was a preferred host in the garden compared to other cultivated parsley/carrot relatives.
Rue (<i>Ruta graveolus</i>)	Giant Swallowtail Black Swallowtail	Skin exposed to sap from this plant and then to sunshine can produce severe skin irritation in some people.
Hercules Club (<i>Zanthoxylum clavaherculis</i>)	Giant Swallowtail	Giant swallowtail larvae feed on Rutaceae including citrus.
Hackberry (<i>Celtis occidentalis</i>) and Sugarberry (<i>C. laevigata</i>)	American Snout Question Mark Hackberry Emperor Tawny Emperor Mourning Cloak	Hackberry is tolerant of salt spray and produces berries eaten by birds.
Mallows including hollyhocks	Common and White Checkered Skippers (can't be told apart by sight)	
Milkweed (<i>Asclepias</i> spp.)	Monarch Queen	Some of the native milkweeds offer sparse vegetation or are difficult to grow. Mexican milkweed (<i>A. curassavica</i>) is the usual garden choice. There is concern that it may become invasive or harbor parasitic diseases.
Mistletoe (<i>Phoradendron</i> spp.)	Great Purple Hairstreak	

Nettle (<i>Urtica</i> spp.) False Nettle (<i>Boehmeria cylindrica</i>)	Red Admiral Eastern Comma Question Mark	If you have a moist, semi-shady site, false nettle could be a good ground cover. Seeds are sold online.
Oaks (<i>Quercus</i> spp.)	Banded Hairstreak Horace's Duskywing Juvenal's Duskywing Southern Oak Hairstreak White M Hairstreak	Eggs are typically deposited on the new, tender growth.
Passionvine or Maypop (<i>Passiflora incarnata</i>)	Gulf Fritillary Zebra Heliconian Variegated Fritillary	The exotic <i>P. caerulea</i> is also used as a host plant and stays green in the winter in coastal SC.
Pawpaw (<i>Asimina triloba</i>)	Zebra Swallowtail	
Pipevines including Dutchman's pipe (<i>Aristolochia marophylla</i>) and Virginia Snakeroot (<i>Endodeca serpentaria</i>)	Pipevine Swallowtail	Dutchman's pipe is the fairly lush pipevine native to the upstate. Virginia snakeroot is found in shaded woods in the lowcountry, but doesn't produce a lot of leaves.
Plantain (<i>Plantago</i> spp.), Toadflax (<i>Linaria</i> sp.) and Purple Gerardia (<i>Agalinis fasciculata</i>)	Common Buckeye	
Red Bay (<i>Persea borbonia</i>)	Palamedes Swallowtail	A swamp understory tree under attack by laurel wilt disease
Redbud (<i>Cercis Canadensis</i>)	Henry's Elfin	
Sassafras (<i>Sassafras</i> spp.) Spicebush (<i>Lindera benzoin</i>)	Spicebush Swallowtail	Both of these tree/shrub species are under attack by laurel wilt disease
Snapdragon (<i>Antirrhinum majus</i>)	Common Buckeye	Usually one of the earliest hosts available since they are planted in early spring
Sumacs (like Winged Sumac, <i>Rhus copallina</i>)	Red-banded Hairstreak	Red-banded Hairstreaks use a variety of other host plants, too.
Sweetleaf (<i>Symplocos tinctoria</i>)	King's Hairstreak	Sweetleaf or Horse Sugar is an understory tree growing along creek or swamp edges
Tuliptree (<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>)	Eastern Tiger Swallowtail	Caterpillars will often be up high on the tree's new growth.
Violets (<i>Viola</i> sp.) including pansies	Variegated Fritillary	More common on passionvine, I've found the caterpillars on pansies in the wintertime.

Willows (<i>Salix</i> spp.)	Viceroy Red-spotted Purple Mourning Cloak	Viceroy caterpillars spend the winter rolled up in silken hibernacula on the tree.
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