



WILDLIFE WINDOW: The Swallowtail Butterfly Want Them Visiting Your Garden?

By the Ponds & Preserves Committee
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Big and flashy, **Swallowtail Butterflies** (*Papilionidae*) are a delight in your garden and include over 550 species. The Swallowtail Butterfly has unique bottom wings that are forked, especially visible when it is still with spread wings. These tail-like appendages resemble the tails of swallow family of birds, hence their name. Most (not all) of these large, brightly colored butterflies feature tails on their hind wings. Everyone can plant a garden to attract more of these beauties to their backyards. Let's learn more about these large and colorful native Florida Swallowtail butterflies.

(Bob Frank photos)



Giant Swallowtail

(*Papilio cresphontes*) are the largest swallowtail butterflies in the U.S., with a wingspan of up to 6 inches.

They are striking, wonderfully exotic-looking butterflies and are also an excellent example of countershading, being dark on the topsides of their wings and bright yellow on the bottom. This gives them better camouflage against predators.

Giant swallowtails lay eggs on citrus trees, as well as prickly ash and common rue.

Black Swallowtail

(*Papilio polyxenes*) have a wingspan of 3-4 inches. The upper-sides of its wings are dark blue to black with rows of yellow spots along the edges of its hindwings and forewings.

The larvae are often known as “parsley caterpillars” since that is one of their most common host plants.

This swallowtail butterfly is found in much of the U.S., except the northwest.



Spicebush Swallowtail

(*Papilio troilus*) are generally black and marked with broad, black hind wings bordered with pale, greenish spots and a wing span of about 4 inches.

Whereas Black Swallowtails have a tiny black dot in the orange circle at the base of their lower wing, the spicebush swallowtails do not.

As the name might suggest, this swallowtail butterfly often hosts on Spicebush.

Butterfly Habitats are threatened. Swallowtails, like many butterfly populations, have been declining in recent decades. Loss of habitat and breeding grounds are likely due to increased use of pesticides, over development, clear-cutting, and deforestation.

How You Can Help! Plant a butterfly garden in your backyard. Butterfly-friendly plants are colorful and add beauty to your yard. Most butterfly gardens are also a magnet for hummingbirds, birds, and beneficial insects. A productive butterfly garden does not require a large land area—even a few key plants can make a huge impact. To attract these delicate creatures, your butterfly garden must provide food for both the adult butterflies and their caterpillars. Though many butterflies will drink nectar from a variety of flowering plants, their caterpillars are often limited as to which plants they can feed on. Visit UF/IFAS Extension Service's: [Butterfly Gardens](#) for more helpful information.

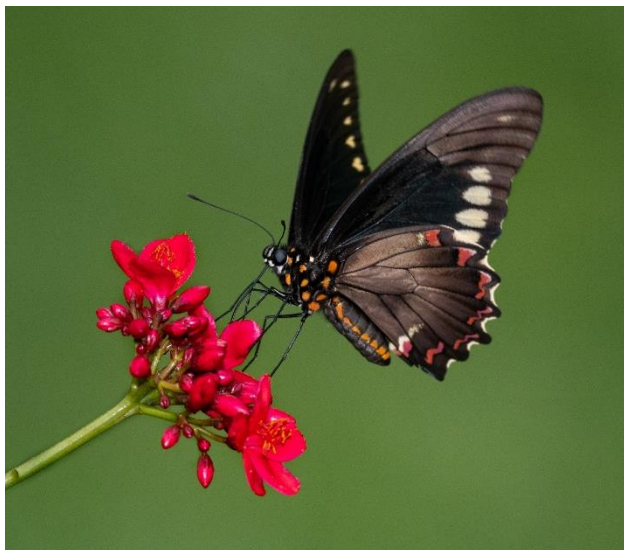


Eastern Tiger Swallowtail.

Attract butterfly beauties to your yard – plant a Butterfly Garden. It's easy with so many colorful native Florida to choose!

Spicebush Swallowtail Caterpillar.

While Caterpillars feed on leaves, avoid using pesticides so the adults can evolve into beautiful butterflies. Be patient.



Polydamas Swallowtail.

Your butterfly garden must provide food for both the adult butterflies and their caterpillars. Help us create more butterfly habitats and make your backyard beautiful too.