



# Butterfly Facts

Butterflies have been treasured for their beauty since the beginning of mankind. Numerous songs and poems have been written about their beauty and they have been chased by millions of children.

There are seven families of butterflies plus the Hesperiidac family, skippers as they are commonly called, that have the same characteristics as moths and butterflies. The Nymphalidae Family, or more commonly called, “Brush Footed” butterflies, make up the largest family of which eleven members are found in the Northeast. This family is known as strong fliers. Several species are migratory, while many over-winter in the adult stage. There are woodland and open area butterflies while some species are more adapted to semi-wooded areas.

Butterflies are metamorphic and while they are in the larva or caterpillar stage they will, depending on species, be feeding on something. One variety, the “Harvester” (Lycaenidae Family) feed on aphids and other unarmored scale insects. All other varieties feed on some type of foliage; grass, shrubs, flowers or garden plants. One variety, the Spring Azure (also of the Lycaenidae Family) one of the earliest butterflies, feed on flower buds, flowers and milk weed and in the process exude a honey dew that attracts ants.

Butterflies of the woodlands feed on a wide variety of foliage that includes beech, wild blueberries, poplar, willow, basswood, nettles, elm, violets, locust and others.

Butterflies of semi and open areas feed on leguminous plants, thistle, burdock, sunflowers, everlastings, forget-me-nots, honeysuckle, snapdragons, grasses, sedges, milkweed, violet, hops, etc.

Depending on the species, butterflies over-winter as eggs, caterpillars, pupae or adult butterflies. Adult butterflies over-winter in holes in trees, in stone walls, wood piles, behind shutters, under leaves, and in a variety of other places. **They will also use your shelter box!**

When a butterfly box is placed, it should be located in an area that has the habitat and food resources that will support the type of species of which you want to help. For example, hardwood forest placement may benefit the already very scarce “Early Hairstreak”, open placement may benefit the “Eastern Tailed Blue”, wooded areas near streams may benefit the “Brown Elfin”. So where you place your box will not actually attract butterflies because they are already present. Box placement will merely benefit the species that are naturally attracted to these areas.