

Introduction

Butterflies are beautiful and probably the most loved of all garden insects. Sadly many butterfly species have undergone massive declines in the wider countryside.



Comma

In Norfolk, flower-filled meadows are now a rarity and across England around 97% of flower-rich meadows have been lost, so it's no surprise that many butterfly species are in trouble. Anything we can do to help butterflies in our gardens not only aids their conservation but can also add to the pleasure of being outside in the garden.

Did you know...?

- In August 1911 a cloud of large white butterflies estimated to number six million was seen at Sutton Fen in Norfolk.
- One of Britain's rarest and largest butterflies, the swallowtail, is only found in the Norfolk Broads but sometimes visits gardens in this area seeking nectar.
- The speckled wood butterfly provides evidence for climate change – over the last 25 years its distribution has expanded rapidly northwards.



Lavender

This leaflet will...

Give you top tips for attracting butterflies to your garden.

Help you identify six species commonly seen in Norfolk gardens.

How to attract butterflies to your garden...

Here are six species of butterfly to look for in your garden and our top tips to attract them to your garden.



Red Admiral

Look for a red band across the forewings which have black tips with white markings.

Top tip: In autumn, red admirals are attracted to rotten fruit so leave fallen apples and plums for them to feed on.



Speckled Wood

A dark brown butterfly identified by the buffish-yellow markings and small dark eye spots with white centres on all wings.

Top tip: Favours mature hedges and trees – look for speckled woods in patches of sunlight under trees.



Small Tortoiseshell

Identified by orange and black on the wings, which are fringed with small blue markings.

Top tip: Small tortoiseshells lay their eggs on the underside of nettle leaves – try leaving a patch of nettles in a sunny position to provide food for their caterpillars.



Peacock

Large and showy. Identify them by false eyes at the end of their forewings. These probably evolved to frighten off predatory birds!

Top tip: You may sometimes find hibernating peacocks in your house – if they wake up in winter when you have the heating on move them to an unheated outbuilding as long as there is a means for them to escape in spring.



Holly Blue

Look for the tiny black spots on the pale blue underwings which separate it from common blue.

Top tip: Grow holly and ivy in your garden - holly blue caterpillars feed on holly in spring whereas caterpillars of the summer generation feed on ivy.



Large White

Often called cabbage whites as their caterpillars feed on plants in the cabbage family. The large white is bigger than the small white and there is more black on the end of the forewing.

Top tip: If you grow brassicas protect them with netting instead of pesticides.

Having a wide range of nectar-rich plants in flower from early spring to late summer is the best way of bringing butterflies to your garden. Choose warm, sheltered, sunny positions for your 'butterfly plants'.

Top tips:

- Buddleia is sometimes known as 'butterfly bush' as its flowers are so attractive to butterflies. Try cutting back parts of this bush in March as this will extend its flowering season.
- For spring nectar grow native bluebell (make sure these have not been taken from the wild), primrose, cuckoo flower and forget-me-not.
- For late summer and autumn nectar try lavender, red valerian, knapweed, Michaelmas daisy, mint, ice plant and ivy. Ivy, which flowers as late as November, is very attractive to red admiral and comma butterflies prior to hibernation.
- Avoid using pesticides if you can – butterflies, including large whites and small whites, are in decline probably because of increased commercial use of pesticides which kills their caterpillars.

Frequently asked questions

Can adult butterflies survive the winter?

Yes – peacock butterflies and small tortoiseshells often successfully overwinter, sometimes hibernating in houses or outbuildings.

Brimstone and comma butterflies also hibernate and in milder winters some red admirals may successfully overwinter.

Do any butterflies migrate?

The painted lady butterflies we see in our gardens in summer are migrants from the Mediterranean or even North Africa. In the past huge migrant clouds of large and small white butterflies crossed the North Sea arriving in dense clouds sometimes numbering millions along the east coast of England. Rarer butterflies such as clouded yellows which occur in small numbers in Norfolk in most years are also migrants.



Painted lady



Peacock butterfly caterpillar

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Alternatively call Norfolk's free wildlife information service on **01603 598333**

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