BUTTERFLY GARDENING WITH NATIVE PLANTS

by Eve A. Hannahs

Before exotic plants were introduced into Florida, our butterfly populations were determined solely by native plant populations, because butterfly larvae are extremely selective feeders and would rather die than switch. Today the relationship remains much the same. Many species choose host plants of a particular family, and some of but one genus.

The brilliant blue *Atala* butterfly of South Florida depends exclusively on *Zamia* for larval foods. Development and alteration of habitat has resulted in drastic loss of host plants.

The elegant zebra swallowtail lays its eggs on species of pawpaw (*Asimina*). *Asimina* is still common in undeveloped areas, but missing from highly developed localities. Fortunately, the plant is found in great numbers in protected areas such as the Ocala National Forest and some state parks. The pawpaw's presence assures populations of zebra swallowtails, but will limit their distribution.
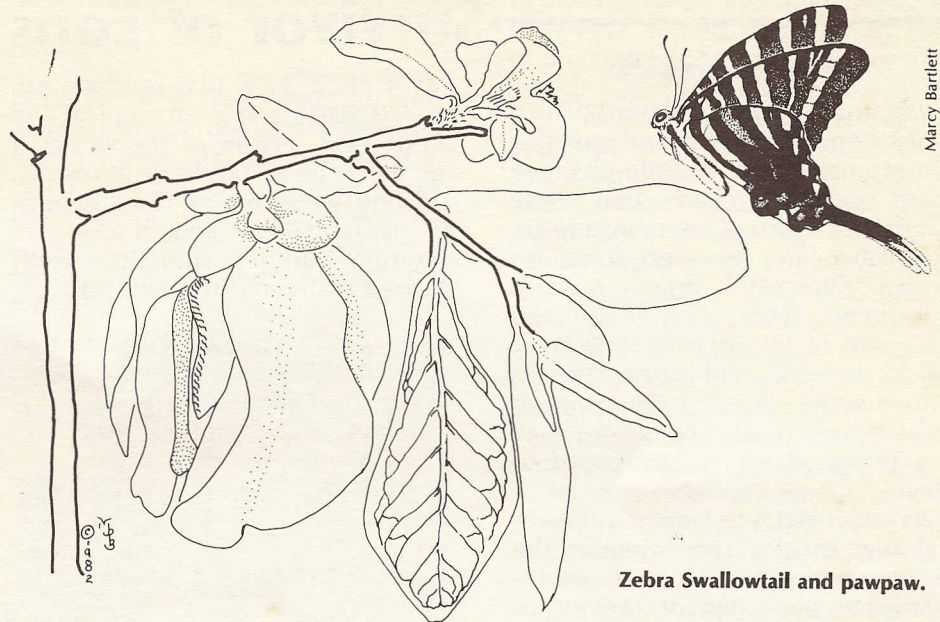
Many plants — both native and exotic — attract visiting butterflies for nectaring foods. Natives are usually better attractors, because in the hybridizing of many plants fragrance and nectar are lost.

To make your own selection of plants attractive to butterflies, visit the roadsides and note the allure of thistle, *Liatris, Gilia, Gerardia, Verbena, Ipomoea, Aesculus, Lyonia, Vernonia, Garberia, Lachnanthes,* and a host of others. The greatest attractor of all is *Bidens*.

To have resident populations of butterflies in your own yard, food for the larvae must be included in the garden. Even then, some butterflies cannot be found in an urban setting because they require certain specific natural habitats.

And, of course, you may nevermore use insecticides or pesticides.

(In 1979, Butterfly Conservation was adopted as a state project for The Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc., to educate the members concerning the plight of the butterfly, and to encourage saving butterfly habitat and the planting of "butterfly gardens." The project was so successful that it was adopted by the National Council of State Garden Clubs, Inc. in 1983, and is now promoted nationwide.)

Zebra Swallowtail and pawpaw.

Below is a partial list of butterflies and the native plants their larvae need for food:

Atala (*Eumaeus atala*) — South Florida coontie (*Zamia floridana*)

Buckeye (*Pricis lavina*), plantain (*Plantago*), and *Ludwegia*

Pearl Crescent (*Phyciodes tharos*) — Asters, especially natives and crown-beard (*Verbesina*)

Dogface (*Calias cesonia*) — Leadplant (*Amorpha fruiticosa*)

Gulf Fritillary (*Agraulis vanillae*), passion vine (*Passiflora* spp.)

Florida Leafwing (*Anaea andria*) — crotons (*Croton linearis*)

Goatweed Butterfly (*Anaea andria*) — crotons (*Croton copitatus* and *C. monanthogynus*)

Great Southern White (*Ascia monuste*) — Saltwort (*Batis maritima*)

Julia (*Dryas julia*) — passion vine (*Passiflora* spp)

Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) — milkweeds (*Asclepias* species, also green milkweeds)

Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*) — chiefly composites (Asteraceae), especially thistles

Queen (*Danus glippus*) — many species of milkweeds (Asclepiadaceae)

Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*) — nettles (*Urtica*), false nettle (*Boehmeria*)

Red Spotted Purple (*Li menitis arthemis astyanax*) — willows (*Salix*), scrub oak (*Quercus ilicifolia*), etc.

Longtailed Skipper (*Urbanus proteus*) — members of the bean family (Fabaceae)

Orange-barred Sulphur (*Phoebis philea*) — cassias

Common Sulphur (*Colias philodice*) — bean family (Fabaceae)

Black Swallowtail (*Papilio polyxenus*) — members of the Umbelliferae

Giant Swallowtail (*Papilio cresphontes*) — citrus, prickly ash (*Zanthoxylum*)

Pipevine Swallowtail (*Papilio philenor*) — pipevines (*Aristolochia*) and knotweeds (*Polygonum*)

Palamedes Swallowtail (*Papilio palamedes*) — red bay (*Persea*), sweet bay (*Magnolia virginiana*), sassafras

Schaus' Swallowtail (*Papilio aristodemus ponceanus*) — torchwood (*Amyris elemifera*), wild lime (*Zanthoxylum fagara*)

Spicebush Swallowtail (*Papilio troilus*) — spicebush (*Benzoin*), red bay (*Persea*), and sweet bay (*Magnolia virginiana*)

Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio glacus*) — wide variety of trees, poplar (*Populus*), tulip tree (*Liriodendron*), cherry (*Prunus* spp)

Zebra Swallowtail (*Papilio marcellus*) — various species of pawpaw (*Asimina*)

Viceroy (*Limenitis archippus*) — willows, especially *Salix nigra* and *S. sericea*

Zebra (*Heliconius charitonius*) — passion vine (*Passiflora* spp)