

Butterflies Found in the Garden

American Copper

This butterfly belongs to the gossamer-winged family of butterflies, a family characterized by the small size of its members. Highly active, the males can often be seen darting in and out of plants while chasing a mate. The caterpillars of this species look a lot like slugs: short, flattened, and tapered on both ends. The copper prefers the nectar of the chive plant.

American Painted Lady

The American Painted lady is a member of the brush-footed family of butterflies. This family is the largest family of butterflies, and is characterized for its short, hairy legs, which are practically useless for walking. The painted lady feeds on everlasting, pussy toes, burdock, and ironweed. It prefers the nectar from thistle, knapweed, aster, yarrows, red clover, marigold, zinnia, milkweed, and heliotrope.

Buckeye

Another member of the brush-footed family, the larvae of the buckeye feeds on snapdragon, toadflax, verbena, and plantain. The adult butterflies prefer the nectar of aster, knapweed, milkweed, coreopsis, and stonecrop.



Eastern Black Swallowtail

This butterfly is a particularly large member of the swallowtail family. The caterpillars of this butterfly favors Queen Anne's lace, cultivated carrot, celery, parsley, and dill. The adults feed on the nectar of milkweed, thistle, phlox, clover, alfalfa, and purple loosestrife.

Giant Swallowtail

The swallowtail family has the largest and some of the most beautiful butterflies in the world. Most of the adults prefer open country, with a few favoring woodland trails or the margins of forests. The larvae feed on prickly ash and hoptree, while the adults prefer the nectar of lantana, milkweed, lilac, goldenrod, and dame's rocket.



Great Spangled Fritillary

Another member of the brush-footed family, the Great Spangled Fritillary is a typical specimen of members of this family, although it is somewhat larger than most of the other members. The caterpillars of this butterfly feed on violets, usually only at night. The adults feed on the nectar of thistle, Joe Pye weed, black-eyed susan, milkweed, coneflowers, bergamot, and ironweed.



Monarch

Perhaps one of the most recognizable and most beautiful butterflies, the monarch is a member of the milkweed family. The larvae feed of milkweed alone, while the adults feed on the nectar of milkweed, goldenrod, Joe Pye weed, thistle, cosmos, gayfeather, lilac, lantana, rotting fruit, sap, mint, alfalfa, coneflowers, and penstemon. The poison found in the milkweed is also what makes this butterfly poisonous to predators. After an encounter with one of these, birds and other animals attempting to feed off of monarchs soon learn to leave the bright orange and black striped butterflies alone.



Each year, monarchs migrate hundreds to thousands of miles south for the winter. A few will end up in California or Florida, but the majority- often tens of millions- of the butterflies overwinter in a forest in central Mexico. When spring comes around again, the butterflies will start back north, laying eggs along the journey. The butterflies produced by these eggs will also continue north, until winter comes again and they return south.





Painted Lady

The painted lady is another member of the brush-footed family of butterflies that can be found in the state. The spiny caterpillars feed on thistle, knapweed, burdock, borage, hollyhock, and common mallow. The adults feed on a wide variety of nectar, from plants such as thistle, dandelion, aster, Joe Pye Weed, gayfeather, zinnia, cosmos, bee balm, sweet william, stonecrop, and milkweed.



Red Admiral

The Red Admiral is yet another member of the brush-footed butterfly family that makes its appearance in the Bellevue Butterfly Garden. The contrasting orange and black colors of the adults can be seen feeding off of rotting fruit, sap, and the nectar of aster, thistle, dandelion, red clover, goldenweed, shasta daisy, gayfeather, dahlia, ageratum, stonecrop, and mint plants. The larvae tend to only eat nettles.



Tiger Swallowtail

The tiger swallowtail is another member of the beautiful swallowtail family. The brightly colored caterpillars, characteristic of this family, feed off of woody plants and trees such as cherry, ash, birch, cottonwood, willow, and lilac. The yellow and black adults can be seen drawing nectar from thistle, milkweed, phlox, Joe Pye weed, clover, bee balm, and sunflowers.

Viceroy

The viceroy is often confused with the monarch, for the two look almost identical. However, the viceroy is a member of the brush-footed family, whereas the monarchs belong to the milkweed family. The viceroy, which is non-poisonous, mimics the colors of the poisonous monarch in order to avoid predation by birds and other animals that would like to feed off of it.