

Why Plant with Natives

Caterpillars ~~ Food for Baby Birds

Insects—especially caterpillars—are crucially important for raising baby birds. This list ranks local native plants by the number of butterfly and moth species that use them as host plants for their caterpillars and includes those plants most likely to be used in the garden and commercially available. The list was compiled from www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder for Eureka, CA (zip code 95501), based on the remarkable work of Dr. Douglas Tallamy (see below). The (number) is the number of caterpillar species reported for each plant. Note that the number of caterpillar species on the list is only valid for native plant species. Nonnative species in the same genus typically support 50% fewer species of caterpillars.

Trees and Shrubs

Willow (328 species of caterpillars)
Oak (275)
Bitter Cherry, Choke Cherry (262)
Aspen, Cottonwood, Poplar (230)
Beach Pine (220)
Red Alder, White Alder (202)
Oregon Crabapple (155)
Bigleaf Maple, Vine Maple, Mountain Maple (120)
Ceanothus (120)*
Grand Fir, White Fir (117)
Douglas Fir (116)
Sitka Spruce (114)
Western Hemlock (108)
Black Huckleberry, Red Huckleberry (107)
Rose (99)
Blackberry, Thimbleberry, Salmonberry (96)
Black Hawthorn (78)
Serviceberry (77)
California Hazelnut (71)
Manzanita (68)
Wild Grape (62)
Red-twig Dogwood (58)
Oregon Ash (57)
Western Red Cedar (49)
Madrone (48)
Douglas Spiraea (44)
Coyote Brush (39)
Oceanspray (37)
Mountain Mahogany (36)
Western Azalea (36)
Snowberry (33)

*Includes Blueblossom, Buckbrush, Deer Brush, Tobacco Brush, Whitethorn.

Flowers and Grasses

Lupine (74 species of caterpillars)
Beach Wormwood, Mugwort (68)
Beach Strawberry, Woodland Strawberry (64)
Sunflower (*Helianthus bolanderi*) (58)
Deer Vetch (*Lotus*) (54)
Canada Goldenrod (53)
Butterweed (*Senecio*) (39)
Willowherb (*Epilobium*) (31)
Penstemons (29)
Milkvetch (29)
Violet (29)
Vetch (28)
Phacelia (25)
Blue Flax (22)
Evening Primrose (21)
Beach Daisy (*Erigeron*) (21)
Yarrow and Sneezeweed (20)
Gum Plant (*Grindelia*) (19)
Cudweed (*Gnaphalium*) (18)
Cinquefoil (*Potentilla*) (17)
Pearly Everlasting (15)
Hedgenettle (14)
Rock Cress (*Arabis*) (14)
Balsamroot (12)
Clematis (12)
Monkeyflower (12; *not* Sticky Monkeyflower)
Checkermallow (*Sidalcea*) (11)
Dogbane (11)
CA Fescue, Red Fescue, Idaho Fescue (11)
Woolly Sunflower (11)
Bee Plant (*Scrophularia*) (11)

See www.Calscape.org for more on BUTTERFLIES and the growing needs of these plants.

For more on Doug Tallamy's excellent work on native plants, gardens and wildlife see: <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/tallamys-hub>. Link has videos and podcasts.

Compiled by Donna Wildearth 2019. Updated: 2022.9, 2023.9