

How to Make a Butterfly Log Cabin: Provide a dry, safe home for butterflies in Ohio winters

Why make a place for Butterflies? Don't they go away in the winter?

The majority of native butterflies found in Ohio hibernate here; very few species migrate for the winter.

Hibernate as a chrysalis	Hibernate as a caterpillar
Tiger swallowtail- <i>Papilio glaucus</i>	Great spangled fritillary- <i>Speyeria cybele</i>
Eastern black swallowtail- <i>Papilio polyxenes asterius</i>	Wood nymph- <i>Cercyonis pegala</i>
Spring azure- <i>Celastrina ladon</i>	Eastern tailed blue- <i>Everses comyntas</i>
Summer azure- <i>Celastrina ladon neglecta</i>	Pearl crescent- <i>Phyciodes tharos</i>
Pipevine swallowtail- <i>Battus philenor</i>	Viceroy- <i>Limenitis archippus</i>
Spicebush swallowtail- <i>Papilio Troilus</i>	Silver checkerspot- <i>Chiosyne nycteis</i>
Zebra swallowtail- <i>Eurytides Marcellus</i>	Red spotted purple- <i>Limenitis arthemis</i>
Silver spotted skipper- <i>Epargyreus clarus</i>	American copper- <i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>
Giant swallowtail- <i>Papilio cressphontes</i>	Orange sulphur- <i>Colias eurytheme</i>

Hibernate as adult butterflies	These few migrate as adult butterflies!
Mourning cloak- <i>Nymphalis antiopa</i>	Buckeye- <i>Junonia coenia</i> ,
American painted lady- <i>Vanessa virginiensis</i>	Painted lady- <i>Vanessa virginiensis</i>
Tortoise shell- <i>Nymphalis vaualbum</i>	Monarch- <i>Danaus plexippus</i>
Eastern comma- <i>Polygonia comma</i>	Red admiral- <i>Vanessa atalanta rubria</i>
Question mark- <i>Polygonia interrogationis</i>	Snout- <i>Libytheana carinenta</i>

Make a 3-foot high x 4-foot wide woodpile with crannies where butterflies can hibernate



Materials needed

- Logs, length around 2 feet - Split wood for large logs, end result should be pieces no more than 8 to 10 inches across (hardwood is preferred over pine)
- It's ideal to have some sort of post to anchor the left and right sides (I used steel fence posts, but anything permanent would work). In that case, some way to drive the posts is needed.
- Some sort of permanent waterproof covering or tarp – If there are a couple of pieces of the material, one can go underneath to reduce rotting of the bottom layer of wood.

Directions

1. Place a piece of tarp or heavy plastic on the ground.
2. Place two long logs (the length of the woodpile) to keep the bottom layer elevated and ensure air circulation.
3. Place a layer of logs on the supporting under-logs until they cover about 4 feet in distance.
4. Add another layer of logs going in the opposite direction.
5. Pound stakes into the ground around the edge of the pile you are making to help keep the logs in place.
6. Keep building the log pile with each layer of logs going in the opposite direction until it is about 3-feet high.
7. Place another piece of tarp on the top and anchor it down with more logs. This keeps the crevices dry during rain and winter melting.

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- If you can, place the log cabin in a sheltered location – on the southeast side of an evergreen, for example.
 - Be sure you don't use any treated lumber or wood. It's toxic to insects.
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Things you might not realize:

Caterpillars, chrysalises and adult butterflies can also spend the winter under the bark of trees, in leaf litter, in brush, attached to branches and in many other nooks and crannies. By design they are well hidden. Delay spring cleanup until they have emerged or you may be unknowingly disposing of the next crop of butterflies.

Look around on warm, sunny winter days. It's not unlikely to see one of the butterflies that overwinter as adults out for a jaunt in February (especially the Mourning Cloak).

Learn more:

*Attracting Butterflies & Hummingbirds to Your Backyard:
Watch Your Garden Come Alive With Beauty on the Wing*

By Sally Roth, Rodale Organic Gardening Book, ISBN: 0875968880

Attract Butterflies to Your Ohio Yard (one-page document, contains information on plants to attract butterflies – nectar & food plants as well as host plants to feed caterpillars).

www.backyardhabitat.info/where_do_i_start.htm

Sources:

Heritage Garden at the Ohio Governor's Residence
www.governorsresidence.ohio.gov

Cox Arboretum
www.metroparks.org/Parks/CoxArboretum/ButterflyHouse.aspx

National Wildlife Federation
www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife

