



CARE INFO

Painted Lady Butterflies



How to Raise Your Butterflies

1. Getting Started

- Always handle the cup of caterpillars gently.
- There should be 3 to 5 small caterpillars in the cup.
- **Do not remove the lid.** There are tiny holes in the lid to provide your caterpillars with oxygen. The food on the bottom of the cup is all the caterpillars need.
- Allow caterpillars at least 24 hours to become active. They should start growing quickly within a few days.
- Stand the cup upright at all times; place it in a warm spot, out of direct sunlight.
- Caterpillars may suspend themselves in gray-white webbing. This is good!

Troubleshooting: If food has shifted from the bottom to the side of the cup (which may happen when caterpillars are delivered in hot weather), turn the cup on its side, food down, and wait 2 to 3 days to see if at least 3 caterpillars are alive. Call 800-698-4438 if you need a replacement.

2. Caterpillar to Chrysalis

- When caterpillars crawl to the top of the cup, they are ready to pupate.
- Caterpillars will attach to the paper under the lid and hang from their tail ends.
- They will shed their final caterpillar exoskeleton and form a pupal exoskeleton: the chrysalis.
- Within 2 days after all the chrysalises form, remove the lid from the cup, lift the paper gently and transfer it to the butterfly house. Tape, paper clip or pin the paper securely to the inside wall of your butterfly house.

Troubleshooting: If a chrysalis detaches from the paper, roll it gently out of the cup onto a small piece of paper towel on the floor of its house. Position the chrysalis so that the emerging butterfly can easily crawl onto a wall of the butterfly house.

3. Butterflies!

- Butterflies will emerge from chrysalises in approximately 7 to 10 days.
- It will take them an hour or two to dry off and stretch their wings.
- After their wings harden, butterflies are ready to fly. Release them now or feed them.
- Nectar: 1 teaspoon sugar dissolved with 1/2 cup tepid water in a small cup. Roll a 5"x 7" piece of paper towel, place one end in the nectar and the other across the top of the cup. It will wick the sugar water. Butterflies will land on the towel to drink the nectar!
- You may also feed them with fresh fruit. Slices of orange or watermelon are best.

- Butterflies can live as long as a month indoors, but it's best to release them within a week so they can find food, mates and lay eggs.

Troubleshooting: If a butterfly doesn't emerge completely from its chrysalis, there is—sadly—nothing you can do to help. Carry the chrysalis outside and place it in a bush or other plant. The insect will die a natural death and will probably be eaten by another animal. Remember: Caterpillars and butterflies are important parts of your local food web.

4. Release

- Celebrate! Share healthy snacks during afternoon recess and release butterflies as a special gift to the Earth. Outside temperature should reach at least 55°F during the day.
- Open your butterfly house and allow a butterfly to crawl onto your hand (or a student's).
- The butterfly will borrow heat from your body to warm itself up to 68°F. It must be at least this warm to fly.
- If your butterfly is reluctant to fly away, help it by gently placing it onto a bush or other plant.
- Repeat with remaining butterflies.

Good Things to Know

- FRASS—the little balls that appear all over the cup—is caterpillar excrement.
- Caterpillars shed their EXOSKELETONS several times. You may see small black balls of exoskeleton in the cup or attached to the end of the chrysalis.
- WEB is sticky and dense. It helps caterpillars hang onto leaves in windy or wet weather and protects them from predators.
- The chrysalis may QUIVER or TREMBLE. This discourages predators.
- MECONIUM is the reddish fluid that butterflies expel when they emerge from their chrysalises. It's a waste product left over from metamorphosis, and it is not blood.
- If you have both males and females, females may lay EGGS before you release them. If eggs hatch, you might try feeding thistle, parsley or hollyhock leaves to the caterpillars.

Looking Closely

- Encourage students to look at the caterpillars several times every day. Record your observations in words, drawings, numbers and charts.
- It's OK to handle the cup, but always be gentle. Don't shake the cup! Keep it upright.

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