

More Fun with Caterpillars!

Rearing

Rearing caterpillars can be a fun activity to do at home or in the classroom! It's an easy way to see all four life stages and the metamorphosis of caterpillars to adults right in front of you. There are various caterpillar raising kits and supplies sold online, but creating your own habitat can be a fun and easy DIY project.

Experts suggest that you go out into nature to find your own caterpillars instead of buying them online. This helps to decrease the spread of disease and keep captive caterpillars' genetics out of native populations, which can be detrimental to their species. For example, Monarch populations are suffering due to an increase in introductions of captively bred individuals. Introducing parasites and weak genetics into native populations make them struggle even more than they already do as a result of habitat loss.

Caterpillars require a small amount of resources to care for, but can be very picky when it comes to things like food or pupation substrate. Each different species of caterpillar has a different diet and some only feed on one host plant. Make sure you learn about a caterpillar's specific diet and prepare for it beforehand. If you find a caterpillar in the wild already eating a plant, it's best to collect from that plant to feed it with. Make sure to keep their food from wilting and dying by placing stems in some sort of covered water dish (like a mason jar with tin foil around the branch ends). Caterpillars also eat **a lot** so make sure to provide them with plenty of food on a regular basis. No additional water source for the caterpillars is needed; they get all of their water from the plants they eat.

Linked below are some articles on rearing caterpillars:

[Rearing Caterpillars](#)

[How to Feed and Care for a Caterpillar](#)

[Caterpillar to Butterfly Kit: Shipped with Live Caterpillars](#)

[How to Make a Caterpillar Home Indoors](#)

[Food for Caterpillars](#)

Organizations

The organizations below have additional information on caterpillars, butterflies and moths.

[Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation](#)

[Pollinator Partnership](#)

Online Identification of Butterflies and Moths

Online identification is one of the easiest ways to identify any insect you may need to – and can be as easy as selecting the state you are in and the insect's color patterns. After doing so, you get access to a huge database of insects that fit that criterion. Some apps, like iNaturalist, can point you in the right direction for a genus or species from a photograph.

[Caterpillars Found in West Virginia](#)
[Caterpillar Identification](#)
[West Virginia Moths](#)
[West Virginia Butterflies](#)
[Butterfly & Moth Identifier](#)
[A Community for Naturalists · iNaturalist](#)

Field Guides

Physical books can be great if you're in nature without access to online resources. Here are a few we recommend.

[The Butterflies of West Virginia and their Caterpillars](#)
[Caterpillars of Eastern North America](#)

Facebook Groups

There are many groups on social media that specialize in insect identification and discussion. These social groups can help you if you are struggling with identification and need a second opinion. It can also be a great place to connect with other insect enthusiasts.

[West Virginia Entomological Society](#)
[West Virginia Bug Identification](#)