

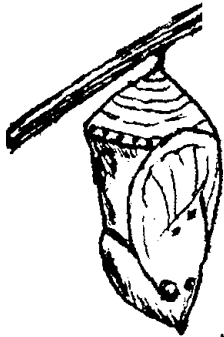
Metamorphosis Magic Caterpillar Rearing Cage

Our **Caterpillar Rearing Cage**, crafted here at Native Nurseries, provides a safe place for your caterpillar to grow and change into a butterfly. To raise a caterpillar, collect some of the plant that it is eating, its larval food plant. Most caterpillars are very specific about food plants. For instance, the zebra longwing and Gulf fritillary caterpillars eat only passion vine, while the black swallowtail caterpillar eats plants in the parsley family (parsley, dill, fennel) or rue.

Try to collect your caterpillar in the act of eating to be certain of its food requirements. Be sure you have access to plenty of the larva food plant for your caterpillar.



We place clippings of the food plant in a small vase or jar of water inside the cage. Use a narrow necked vase or provide a lid on a jar to prevent caterpillars from drowning. Check the water level and food supply daily. Provide young tender leaves for young caterpillars. Clean the floor of the cage daily. Placing paper towels on the floor helps.



Caterpillars usually pupate in one of two locations. Most butterfly larvae suspend themselves from hard surfaces like twigs or the net supports of the cage. Many moths migrate to the ground or leaf litter to form their cocoons or chrysalides. Most moths will either spin a cocoon (and possibly wrap up in leaves) or form a chrysalis on the ground in leaf litter. If uncertain of where your caterpillar will pupate, provide both options. We place a half-inch of soil in a saucer with leaf litter on top.

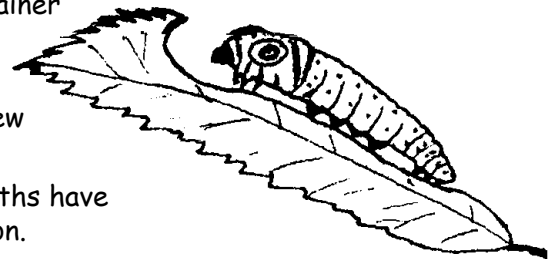
Keep your cage out of the sun and rain. A screened porch is an ideal spot, though indoors in moderate air conditioning is okay.

Depending on the species and the time of year, your butterfly may emerge in one or two weeks or as long as a year or two! Chrysalides are fragile and should be handled gently or not at all.

You may have some mortality during the larval stage. This may be caused by a virus, bacterial infection or parasitoid. Remove dead larvae from the cage. You should not feel badly about this if you have been feeding your larvae regularly and keeping their container clean.

Check your cage daily to see if a butterfly or moth has emerged. Butterflies should not be handled for the first few hours after they emerge and then should be released.

At least once each season, after your butterflies or moths have emerged, clean your cage thoroughly with a weak bleach solution.



Recommended Reading (available at Native Nurseries)

Butterflies and Moths Golden Guide
The Life Cycles of Butterflies
Florida Butterfly Gardening by Marc C. Minno
Florida Butterfly Caterpillars by Marc C. Minno, et al
Butterflies Through Binoculars
Florida's Fabulous Butterflies
Caterpillars of Eastern North America



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