

# Swallowtail Butterflies

## Black Swallowtail

**Species:** *polyxenes*  
**Genus:** *Papilio*  
**Family:** Papilionidae  
**Order:** Lepidoptera  
**Class:** Insecta  
**Phylum:** Arthropoda  
**Kingdom:** Animalia

## Tiger Swallowtail

**Species:** *glaucus*  
**Genus:** *Papilio*  
**Family:** Papilionidae  
**Order:** Lepidoptera  
**Class:** Insecta  
**Phylum:** Arthropoda  
**Kingdom:** Animalia

## Spicebush Swallowtail

**Species:** *troilus*  
**Genus:** *Papilio*  
**Family:** Papilionidae  
**Order:** Lepidoptera  
**Class:** Insecta  
**Phylum:** Arthropoda  
**Kingdom:** Animalia



## **Conditions for Customer Ownership (per USDA Permits)**

We hold permits allowing us to transport these organisms. To access permit conditions, [click here](#).

**Never purchase living specimens without having a disposition strategy in place.**

The USDA considers these butterflies to be a plant pest. We hold a permit to transport these pests for some states, however, the following states require an end-user permit in order to receive swallowtails: AL, AK, AZ, AR, CA, CO, DC, FL, GA, HI, ID, IA, LA, MD, MA, MT, NE, NV, NM, NC, OR, RI, SC, SD, TN, VA. As a condition for transporting these organisms, we are required to notify the end user of the following information: **For no reason shall any of these plant pests be released into the environment. These organisms may not be indigenous to your area and, if released, they could adversely affect your local environment.**

## **Primary Hazard Considerations**

- Always wash your hands before and after handling pupae or butterflies.
- Butterflies can fly away. Be careful when opening their cages.

## **Availability**

- Swallowtail pupae are wild-collected at the end of October. Pupae will remain viable in the refrigerator for about six months. Shortages may occur if demand is high.

## **How Will Animals Arrive and Immediate Requirements**

- Your swallowtail pupae will arrive wrapped in cotton or paper towel inside a 4 oz. jar.. If you don't want to hatch them immediately, you can store them in a refrigerator for up to six months.

## **To Emerge Pupae**

- To hatch your pupae, soak them in room temperature fresh water for one minute and then place them in a terrarium. It will take 2-4 weeks before butterflies will emerge. When they first emerge, swallowtails will beat their wings to dry off excess water. They may also excrete a pink colored liquid, their metabolic waste, called meconium.

## **Captive Care**

### **Habitat:**

- A [3 gallon plastic terrarium](#) or [10 gallon aquarium](#) works well for keeping swallowtails. You can add dirt, grass, moss, sticks, and/or branches to the habitat to give the butterflies something to climb on.
- The habitat should be kept at room temperature (70-80°F). No special lighting or heat is required.

### **Care:**

- The habitat should be misted daily with dechlorinated water, to provide humidity in the habitat before and after the butterflies emerge. You can dechlorinate tap water by leaving it out for 24-48 hours, or adding a [dechlorinating agent](#) to it.
- Once the butterflies emerge, add a food source. Place a cotton ball soaked in sugar water (3 tablespoons of brown sugar to 1 cup of water) in a small container inside the habitat. You can substitute a sports drink for sugar water. Change the cotton balls daily.



## Information

- Method of reproduction: Sexual. Males and females mate a couple days after emerging. Females can lay about 100 eggs during their lifetime.
- Determining sex:

## Life Cycle

- Complete metamorphosis.
  - **Egg:** This stage lasts about 10 days.
  - **Larvae:** Continually eat leaves for about a month while growing and molting. Once full grown, finds a leaf to curl up in and pupate.

	Male	Female
Tiger Swallowtail	Yellow wings w/ 4 black stripes	1-Yellow Form: Yellow wings w/ >4 black stripes. 2-Dark Form: Gray wings w/ black stripes.
Black Swallowtail	Black body w/ yellow spots along each side. Wings are black w/ 2 bands of yellow markings w/ red spots.	Black body w/ yellow spots along each side. Wings are black with 2 bands of yellow & blue spot markings
Spicebush Swallowtail	Black body & wings w/ white spots along the margin	Black body & wings w/ white spots along the margin. Hind wings have blue and white spots.

- **Pupae** Protects the swallowtail from danger while it transforms into a butterfly. Can stay in this stage until warm temperatures arrive or are recreated.
- **Adult** : Emerges from the pupae and begins to flap its wings. Wing span is about 2-5 inches. Will live for about 2-3 weeks during which time females lay eggs.

## Wild Habitat

- Swallowtail butterflies can be found throughout the US and Canada. They feed on the nectar of flowers as they fly about.

## Special Notes

- There are hundreds of types of swallowtail butterflies throughout the world.
- Swallowtail butterflies are among the most colorful in the world and often time use their camouflage to blend into their surroundings to avoid predators.

## Disposition

- Swallowtail butterflies will naturally die 2-3 weeks after they emerge from the pupae.
- If the swallowtails must be euthanized, one of the following steps should be taken before disposing:
  - Put them into a container or bag and freeze for 48 hours.
  - Place them in 70% isopropyl alcohol for 24 hours.
  - Autoclave them @ 121°C for 15 min.
- A deceased specimen should be disposed of as soon as possible. Consult your school's recommended procedures for disposal. In general, dead insects should be handled as little as possible or with gloves, and wrapped in an opaque plastic bag that is sealed (tied tightly) before being placed in a general garbage container away from students.