

# 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

We are a USDA compliant facility and hold all necessary permits to transport our organisms. Each state is assisted by the USDA to determine which organisms can be transported across state lines. Some organisms may require end-user permits. Please contact your local regulatory authorities with questions or concerns. To access permit conditions, [click here](#).

**Never purchase living specimens without having a disposition strategy in place.** Live specimens should not be released into the wild! Please dispose of any unwanted organisms using the guidelines below.

## 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.

## Arrival Care

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.

## 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.
- **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". 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.

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

## 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 minutes.
- 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.