



MOTH HABITAT

1. Learn
2. Keep a messy yard
3. Plant diversely
4. Provide nectar plants
5. Provide larval host plants
6. Eliminate pesticide use
7. Certify

1. LEARN

Moths are essential pollinators that visit both night-blooming flowers, such as tufted evening primrose (*Oenothera caespitosa*) and sacred datura (*Datura wrightii*), as well as daytime-blooming plants in butterfly gardens. Like butterflies, most moths feed on a host plant during their caterpillar stage. However, unlike butterflies that mostly consume leaves, some moth species also eat seeds or roots or bore into woody stems or branches, consuming the plant from the inside. Unlike butterflies, some moths in North America lack functional mouths or digestive tracts as adults. These moths, including wild silk moths, do all of their feeding as caterpillars and emerge as non-feeding adults that live for only a few days before mating and dying. For moths that do not feed as adults, recognizing and protecting their larval host plants is increasingly important.

Adult moths and their caterpillars are crucial food sources for a wide variety of wildlife, including other insects, spiders, frogs, lizards, bats, and birds. Night-flying adult moths are a major part of bats' diet. Many birds eat both moths and caterpillars, with caterpillars being especially important for feeding their young. About 96% of terrestrial birds rely on caterpillars to rear their young. For example, chickadee parents must find 6,000–9,000 caterpillars to successfully rear one clutch of young. That's a lot of caterpillars!

2. KEEP A MESSY YARD

Moths and their caterpillars rely on fallen leaves, old stems, and other plant debris for protection from predators and as a place to spend the winter. Leaving plant debris in your garden or moving it under trees and shrubs can provide vital protection and overwintering sites for these insects.

4. PROVIDE A DIVERSITY OF NECTAR PLANTS FOR MOTHS

A diverse array of plants attracts a wide variety of moth species. By planting a range of native plants, you can attract more moths to your habitat, which in turn provides more foraging opportunities for birds and bats.

FLOWER CHARACTERISTICS THAT ATTRACT MOTHS:

- Strong floral perfumes attract moths from a distance, they're then guided by visual cues.
- Plants with clusters of small tubular flowers, like pink fairy duster, attract owlet and inchworm moths.
- Plants that bloom at night.

WHAT TO PLANT:

- Parry's agave (*Agave parryi*)
- Soaptree yucca (*Yucca elata*)
- Sacred datura (*Datura wrightii*)
- Sweet four o'clock (*Mirabilis longiflora*)
- Tufted evening primrose (*Oenothera caespitosa*)
- Christmas cholla (*Cylindropuntia leptocaulis*)
- Pencil cactus (*Cylindropuntia leptocaulis*)
- Night-blooming hesperaloe (*Hesperaloe nocturna*)
- Night-blooming cereus (*Peniocereus greggii*)



Tufted evening primrose (*Oenothera caespitosa*), Sue Carnahan





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5. PROVIDE LARVAL HOST PLANTS

MOTH LARVAL HOST PLANTS¹

- Velvet mesquite (*Neltuma velutina*)
 - Hubbard's silk moth, tricolor buckmoth, black witch moth, owlet moths
- Catclaw Acacia (*Senegalia greggii*)
 - Hubbard's silkmoth
- Palo verde (*Parkinsonia* spp)
 - Hubbard's silkmoth
- Globe mallow (*Sphaeralcea* spp)
 - Bird dropping moths, mallow moths, clearwing moths
- Arizona yellowbells (*Tecoma stans*)
 - Hartweg's sphinx moth, rustic sphinx moth, florestan sphinx moth, calleta silkmoth
- Yucca
 - Yucca moth, tortrix moth
- Graythorn (*Ziziphus obtusifolia*)
 - Pyrrha's prominent moth

6. ELIMINATE PESTICIDE USE

Systemic insecticides effectively eliminate all types of insects, including beneficial pollinators like moths. These chemicals do not differentiate between "good" and "bad" insects, often causing unintended consequences and disrupting natural systems. To avoid damaging your ecosystem, consider using healthier, more sustainable options such as mosquito dunks and incorporating Integrated Pest Management practices.

7. CERTIFY YOUR MOTH-APPROVED HABITAT

Once you have completed your habitat, email habitat@tucsonaudubon.org to receive your certification sticker.



¹ See our Caterpillar-Approved Habitat for more information on how to create habitat for moth caterpillars