



## PAINTED LADY BUTTERFLY

*Vanessa cardui*

The Painted Lady butterfly is one of the most common of all butterflies. It, like other insects, has three pairs of legs, but the front pair is reduced in size. The front legs are too short to be useful for walking and are kept folded against the chest. Painted Ladies have hairy front legs and hence are grouped with other brush-footed butterflies.

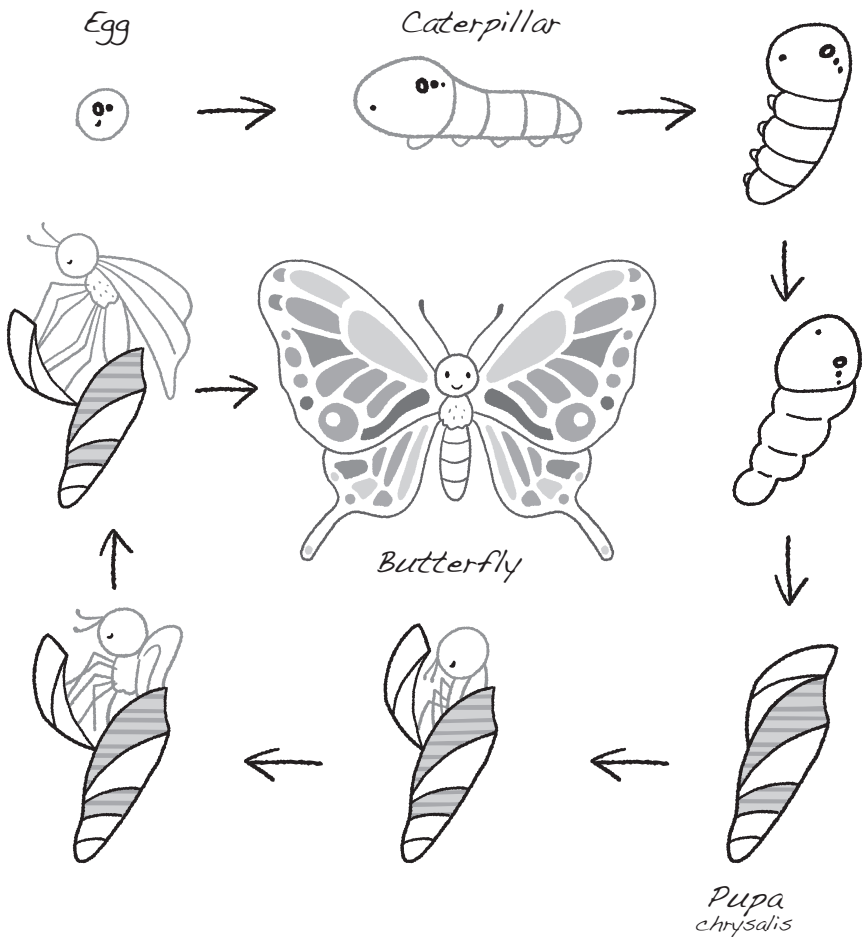
The wingspan is 4.5 to 6 cm (1  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 2  $\frac{1}{4}$  in). The tops of the wings are white, orange, brown, and black. The undersides also have tan, blue, and purple. The tips of the forewings are black with white spots and smooth (not ragged) edges. The Painted Lady's natural habitat is open woods, meadows, and deserts all over the United States and Mexico and much of Canada.

# BUTTERFLY JUNGLE

Live Butterfly Habitat



Painted Lady caterpillars feed on such plants as fiddleneck, nettle and hollyhock; the adults feed on nectar from any flower. An adult sucks out the flower nectar by means of a long proboscis. Taste receptors on the second two pairs of legs enable the butterfly to taste sweet liquids with its feet. Contact of these organs with the petals of a flower sets off a reflex that uncoils the long, flexible proboscis that can be worked into the smallest opening to reach the flower nectar. In feeding, these butterflies pollinate and cross-pollinate a vast number of plants.



Metamorphosis of a butterfly has four distinct developmental stages: egg, larva (caterpillar), pupa (chrysalis), and adult. At room temperature the Painted Lady butterfly remains in the egg stage for 4 days, in the larval stage for 12 to 18 days, and in the pupal stage for about 8 days. The adults mate and begin laying eggs within 4 days after they emerge

from the pupal stage.

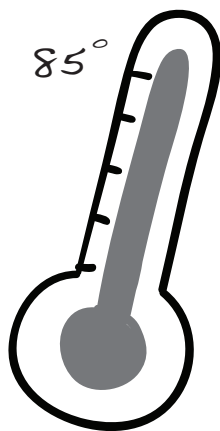
At normal room temperature, growth of the caterpillars will be rather fast. From 7 to 11 days after you receive them, the caterpillars will have finished their growth and will have changed to the pupal stage (chrysalids). Butterfly larvae form chrysalises, characterized by a hard casing surrounding the pupae. Butterfly larvae do not spin cocoons; cocoons are protective casings built by moth larvae.

After the adult emerges from the chrysalis, a red liquid, called meconium, is sometimes forced from the tail of the butterfly. It is left over from wing formation, along with unneeded tissues of the caterpillar. The butterfly will pump fluid into its wings to help them unfold. The wings will dry and harden within 24 hours.

## CARE AND MAINTENANCE

You will receive several butterfly larvae and a dark layer of food in a plastic cup with some filter paper on top. Open the container and observe each larva to be sure they arrived alive. Put the filter paper and the lid back on the cup securely and keep the lid on until the chrysalis has formed.

The caterpillars can take a fairly wide range of temperatures. Growth stops at or below about 50° F and at or above 110° F. Optimum temperature is about 85° F. Keep the caterpillars out of direct sun, and don't let them freeze.



Feeding the larvae is simple; just keep them on the prepared food in the cup which they were shipped. Put the container into the Butterfly House keeping the lid on. They will spend most of their time eating, inside the small container.

The larvae will feed and grow for 7 to 10 days. Then they will crawl to the top of the container and hang down. After about a day the skin splits down the back; underneath are the chrysalises. They will soon harden and change to a golden color. Two days after the larvae pupate, remove the paper disk with the chrysalids attached. They are now ready to be placed in your **Butterfly Jungle™**.

## **BUTTERFLY JUNGLE™**

The papers with the chrysalises may be attached to the inside walls of the butterfly house with masking tape. Be sure each chrysalis is free-hanging in its downward position. Add a few twigs to the butterfly house, being sure they lean against the sides rather than lie flat. The adult butterflies will alight on these twigs and small branches. When the chrysalises are about 7 to 10 days old, they will darken. Wing color will begin to show through. The adults will emerge within 12 to 24 hours.

The butterflies will not be hungry immediately after emerging. They have food stored in their bodies for the first day or two. They will live from 1 to 3 weeks, depending largely on the regularity with which they are fed.

To feed the adults, prepare a 5% solution of household sugar water (1 part sugar to 20 parts water). Pour the solution into a shallow dish and put in some cotton balls or pieces of paper toweling to act as wicks. Change the solution every 2 days to prevent spoilage. Gatorade may also be used undiluted.

Provide plants or crumpled facial tissues on which the female butterflies may lay their eggs. Observe daily for butterfly mating and egg-laying behavior.

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