



Butterflies -- Tips and Care Instructions

Each reared butterfly is carefully fed, misted and exercised before being placed in an individual protective envelope or box. Butterflies require minimal care if released within a day or so of arrival. They arrive ready to be released. Should you need to transfer them into a mass release container, you will have separate instructions to help you.

When you receive your butterflies, as a precaution, please check each envelope or box for movement. With envelopes you can hold them up to the light and you will see movement. With boxes, you can hold them up to the light or listen very closely to the box and you should be able to hear movement. Should a butterfly escape, it will fly to a light source such as a window. Pick up with folded wings and return to the envelope or box.

If your shipping container arrived with cool packs, you can re-freeze these packs and return to the box to keep the butterflies cool. If it is an unusually hot day, upon arrival and after checking each one, you may place your box into the refrigerator, away from the freezer, for about 30 minutes to help cool the butterflies down. After that, keep at room temperature in a cool and dark part of your house.

Always transport your butterflies in the shipping box with a cold pack and keep from heat, direct sunlight and direct exposure to airflow from heating and cooling vents.

When it is time for the release, allow the butterflies to warm up by taking your butterflies out of the shipping box for 15-30 minutes, depending upon the outside temperature. Just bear in mind that the hotter it is, the less time they need to warm up—but in extremely hot weather, they could get overheated. It needs to be at least 65 degrees F. for Monarchs and about 70 degrees F for Painted Ladies—in order for them to fly out of their container.

If it is cooler than the above-mentioned temperatures, you may warm up the butterflies (in their box) by warming the box in a warm car or a warm room, —never apply heat directly on the envelopes. Just warm them up enough so there is movement and so that the box is warm. Butterflies are cold blooded and need to be warm to fly. ***THIS IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT!***

Inclement Weather

If it is raining, do not release your butterflies but wait until the rain stops. A light mist is okay, though, as long as it is warm out. If you cannot release them within 24 hours because of inclement weather, please feed your butterflies using pesticide-free flowers, or cotton balls soaked in Gatorade, or cotton balls soaked in 1 part sugar to 9 parts water. Release your butterflies into a big box or container and make the container escape free by securing paper towels or netting over the top of the box. Feed by placing “nectar-soaked” cotton balls on the floor of the container. Also, lightly mist the butterflies through the netting several times a day or more if your house is dry because of heat or air conditioning. If they do not immediately feed, you can teach them to nectar on the cottonballs. Wait until a butterfly alights on an object with its wings closed. Gently pick up the butterfly between two fingers and hold its legs on the drenched cotton ball for 10 seconds or until it unrolls its proboscis and begins to drink. The butterfly tastes with its feet and drinks through this straw-like appendage.

Tips for your photographer or videographer:

As always, we are certainly available to speak to your photographer or videographer about the best way to capture your butterfly release on film. However, here are some specific techniques that should help. Try to capture a specific moment and a specific butterfly. Get as close to your subject as possible. Do not try to capture the butterflies against the sky as it will be very difficult to see the butterflies in flight; they will appear very small and in some cases be impossible to see. Since butterflies will fly towards bright objects, including flowers, wait for one to land and photograph it. You may want to reserve a few butterflies specifically for photography purposes. These can be placed in a refrigerator within their envelopes (not near the freezer) for about 30 – 45 minutes. When you remove them from the refrigerator, they will be cool and will not fly for some time. Carefully pick them up with wings folded between your second and third fingers. Place them where you want them and shoot. In the sun, the wings will act as solar panels and as they begin to warm up, they will become more active and will soon take flight. Before that time, however, there should be time enough to take some pictures!