

Add Some Spice to Your Butterfly Garden!

Are you looking for a sweet addition to your butterfly garden? *Lindera benzoin* (spicebush) is a fast growing, deer resistant, native shrub that will not only attract butterflies but also add a pop of color to your early spring and fall garden.

Spicebush provides almost year-round interest. If you rub the twigs, leaves or fruit of spicebush, you will smell the sweet, spicy fragrance for which it is named. In early March, tiny yellow star-shaped flowers bloom in clusters. The summer's bright green oval leaves turn yellow in the fall. The female spicebush produces red berries that attract a variety of birds. At least 3-5 bushes are needed if berries are a goal. In the wild, spicebush typically grows in the shady woodlands. However, it is tolerant to a wide range of light conditions, including full sun. Planting in full sun results in denser, less vigorous growth, but with increased flower and fruit production. It can grow from 6-12 ft tall and wide. Although it prefers rich, moist soils, spicebush is tolerant of a variety of soil conditions. It does well in wet areas and near ponds. Spicebush is low-maintenance and highly disease and pest resistant.

Spicebush is a host plant for many butterflies and moths including the spicebush swallowtail butterfly, *Papilio troilus*. The spicebush butterfly is mostly black with white spots on the fore wings and pale greenish spots on the hind wings. Zinnias, lantana and pentas, as well as other high nectar flowers, attract these butterflies to your garden. The butterflies lay a single egg on the underside of the spicebush leaf or the leaf of other host plants such as sassafras or sweet magnolia.

The young caterpillar looks like a bird dropping. During the day, the caterpillar spins a silk lining inside a folded leaf to form a safe hiding place; it comes out to eat at night. As the caterpillar grows and transforms, it becomes bright green with blue spots and has enormous false eyes that make it look like a tiny snake. Even though it looks ferocious to its predators, it is harmless. The chrysalis looks like a dried leaf and can be green or brown with "horns" at the top. There can be several generations of this beautiful butterfly in a single year!

Native, fast-growing and deer resistant? Adapting to a variety of light and soil conditions, adding seasonal color and attracting butterflies? Spicebush truly is sugar and spice and everything nice!

To learn more about incorporating native shrubs and other native plants into your butterfly garden and throughout your yard, check out Rutgers Fact Sheet FS1140 "Incorporating Native Plants in Your Residential Landscape."

Checklist for September

Flower and Vegetable Garden

- ✓ Dig up and cure tender summer bulbs when foliage turns brown. Store in a cool, dry place.
- ✓ Plant winter pansies and fall annuals, i.e., ornamental cabbage and kale.
- ✓ Collect seeds from perennials and annuals. Store in a cool, dry place.
- ✓ Buy and plant spring flowering bulbs, such as daffodils and tulips. See [FS1220 "Spring Flowering Bulbs"](#).
- ✓ Harvest herbs and flowers for drying.

Indoor Plants

- ✓ Ensure houseplants are pest-free before taking them indoors.
- ✓ Check to see if your houseplants are root bound. If so, remove carefully and repot.

Lawn

- ✓ Continue to mow and fertilize lawns, as needed. This is the best time to fertilize and seed your lawn or dethatch and aerate, if needed.
- ✓ Check Ocean County Hazardous Waste schedule at 1-800-55RECYCLE or (732) 506-5047 or visit the website www.co.ocean.nj.us/SolidWaste for information on disposal of pesticides and other hazardous waste.