



HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR PAINTED LADY CATERPILLARS (LARVAE)

The Painted Lady larvae come together in one container and must be very gently transferred one by one to the smaller containers. **You may wait up to five days after you receive the larvae when they are larger to do the transfer as there is plenty of food in there with them.** Do not transfer the caterpillars if they are motionless as they may be going through an instar. This is when they moult their skin and grow. They will start moving around again after they are done. Do not touch the larvae with your fingers, use the little brush provided. It's not necessary to add any more air holes to the lids. I provide 25 containers. If you happen to receive a few extra caterpillars, place two in one container and just add a little extra food for them.

Using a knife, cut and divide the painted lady food and divide it between the small containers. Then using the paintbrush provided sweep the larva gently on top of the food or on the side of the container. It does not matter if the food is chunky at the bottom they will eat it just the same. Take care not to shake or tip the container after the food and caterpillars are placed inside so the food does not roll on top of the little critters. Remember to keep the lids on the containers at all times, as caterpillars are little 'escape artists'.

The containers and lids are a tight fit together with the paper that goes under the lid, so here are some tips to help you do it more easily. Place the paper over the container. Spray the paper with a light mist of water from a spray bottle (only one or two light sprays from a distance). This helps the lid slide down over the paper more easily. (It will dry quickly.) Do not spray the caterpillars. Do not try to push the lid straight down onto the container. With your thumb on top and fingernails under the ridge of the container, squeeze together and repeat all the way around.

Please leave the containers on a shelf at room temperature **away from direct sunlight**. Sunlight will cause condensation and moisture is not healthy for the caterpillars. The caterpillars will keep on eating the special diet, which is a combination of soy, wheat germ and other nutrients for a several days. When the caterpillar has eaten about half the food, you can open the lid and sweep out the frass (caterpillar droppings) and webbings with the small paintbrush. Put the lid back on and make sure to put back the paper under the lid for humidity control. If the paper is soaking wet replace it with clean, dry coffee filter paper. Put the containers back on the shelf.

When you see red frass balls, the caterpillars have finished eating. They will soon attach themselves to the paper under the lid, hang upside down in a "J" form and transform into a chrysalis (pupa) without your help. When this happens do not disturb the caterpillar or pupa for at least 48 hours until they have dried and hardened.

Do not pull the pupa away from the paper. After hardening, take the paper with the pupa attached, from the container and pin the paper (using a straight pin) onto the side (not the top) of a flight cage, hanging down in a natural position. The butterfly will pump its wings and dry them when it emerges. You should line the bottom of the cage with paper towels. If your chrysalis



does not attach itself properly to the paper or falls off just rest the chrysalis on the bottom of your flight cage on top of the paper towel and the butterfly should emerge as usual about eight days later.

If the emerging butterfly falls from its chrysalis, it must be able to crawl up again in a hurry to dry its wings, so your flight cage must have a netting wall for it to crawl up. Slippery plastic or glass containers are not suitable.

The pupal stage will last eight to ten days depending on how warm the room is. Please never leave the insect, in any form in direct sunlight without shade. Handle the larvae as little as possible especially during moulting or pupation.

After emergence they will take a day or so to dry their wings. Do not be alarmed by the red liquid that you see during emergence, it's not blood. It's called meconium and the butterflies use this fluid to pump up their wings. You may want layers of paper towels on the bottom of the cage to catch dripping meconium. The butterflies will usually not nectar immediately after emergence. If you keep them for longer than two days they will need to nectar. Sliced oranges will do or a little Gatorade (yes, the drink! any flavour but I use orange) on a cotton ball on a plastic lid at the bottom of the flight cage. This will attract them if they are ready to nectar and provide the sweetness they require. You may see their little proboscis tube for feeding come out. You may also witness mating within two days of emergence. If you see two butterflies attached, they are mating. Please do not disturb!

Releases can be planned in time for egg-laying which usually occurs from 5—7 days after emergence. At this time female butterflies will begin to search for appropriate host plants on which to deposit their eggs.

Please be sure to release on a warm day (24C is best), never in the pouring rain, and well before six pm. The butterflies will immediately try to find nectar plants on which to nectar and or seek shelter for the night in trees.

At normal room temperature, growth of the caterpillars will be quick. By about the third week after you receive the caterpillars they should be butterflies and ready for release. From 7 to 11 days after you receive them, the caterpillars will have finished their growth and will have changed to the pupal stage (chrysalis). Butterfly larvae form chrysalis, characterized by a hard casing surrounding the pupae. Butterfly larvae do not spin cocoons, cocoons are protective casings built by moth larvae. At room temperature the Painted Lady butterfly remains in the egg stage for 4-5 days, in the larval stage for 12 to 18 days, and in the pupae stage for about 8-10 days. Painted lady butterflies may begin laying eggs within 4 days after they emerge. They are beautiful and hardy butterflies.



Enjoy your Painted Ladies and Gentlemen.
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The picture on the left shows the painted lady emerged, meconium stains on the paper and several pupa casings both empty and full.