



FYN Garden Q & A Series

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FYN Topic: Swallowtail Butterflies

Question: What is the large black swallowtail I've seen flying at the butterfly garden at Terry Park? It has strikingly similar markings to the much talked about Schaus Swallowtail found only in the Florida Keys. Steve via email

Answer: You've likely seen either the Polydamus Swallowtail or its larger cousin, the Giant Swallowtail. Both have been seen at Terry Park. The Polydamus is the more likely of the two. Their caterpillars are prevalent in this garden thanks to the host plant, Dutchman's Pipevine. The Polydamus wing span is 3.5-4.5 inches compared to the Giant's 5 -7.5 inches. Both have distinct yellow spots or banding running across their fore and hind wings. The Polydamus looks browner in the sun and does not have the signature swallow "tails" on their hind wings. Also, the Giant Swallowtail looks completely yellow when their wings are folded up while resting.

The much endangered Schaus Swallowtail looks very similar to both. It has tails like the Giant but is not known to reside here. The Schaus is so rare, only four were found in the wild last spring in the Florida Keys. A last ditch effort to keep them from extinction is underway.

Learn more about butterfly habitat in our area at our upcoming SWFL Butterfly Conference planned for November 3 at the Lee County Extension office. Cost is \$15. This year's keynote speaker is Dr. Roger L. Hammer, an award-winning naturalist and native plant expert from Miami-Dade County. Learn more at www.lee.ifas.ufl.edu. Or, call the Horticulture Help Desk at 239-533-7504.



Giant Swallowtail
Photo: flmnh.ufl.edu



Polydamus Swallowtail
Photo: Jerry F. Butler, UFL



Schaus Swallowtail
Photo: Jaret C. Daniels, UFL

Useful Links

www.floridayards.org
<http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu>
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/>
<http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu>

Thomas Becker is an extension agent for the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods (FYN) program at the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the Horticulture Help Desk at 239-533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. or by emailing Extgardener@leegov.com. Visit his Web page at <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml>

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