

Native Trees --Top rated tree species for the southeast region based on their ability to host butterfly and moth species (valuable baby bird food)

Our beloved birds—like cardinals, chickadees, orioles, bluebirds, and so many more—must feed their babies insects and other invertebrates. For example, to raise one nest of chickadee babies, parents must forage up to 9,000 caterpillars to feed them (Brewer 1961).

What nourishes caterpillars? Native plants! Caterpillars of native insects depend on native host plant foliage as their food sources—and these plants flourish despite the munching.

The native trees listed below are “hosts with the most.” Their leaves provide food for different kinds of insect caterpillars. The more native insects your property supports, the more songbirds and other cherished wildlife you can help.

No. of species of butterfly & moth caterpillars supported by each tree

Tree	Number of insects that are attracted to this tree
Oak (genus <i>Quercus</i>) White Oak is most nutritious tree for birds.	557
Black cherry (genus <i>Prunus</i>)	456
Willow (genus <i>Salix</i>)	455
Birch (genus <i>Betula</i>)	413
Poplar (genus <i>Populus</i>)	368
Crabapple (genus <i>Malus</i>)	311
Maple (genus <i>Acer</i>)	285
Elm (genus <i>Ulmus</i>)	213
Pine (genus <i>Pinus</i>)	203
Hickory (genus <i>Carya</i>)	200
Hawthorn (genus <i>Crataegus</i>)	159
Alder (genus <i>Alnus</i>)	156
Basswood (genus <i>Tilia</i>)	150
Ash (genus <i>Fraxinus</i>)*	150
Walnut (genus <i>Juglans</i>)	130
Beech (genus <i>Fagus</i>)	126
Chestnut (genus <i>Castanea</i>)	125

*Statistics in this chart from Douglas Tallamy, *Bringing Nature Home, how you can sustain wildlife with native plants.*

This is a more extensive list of native trees for reference.

Tree	Lepidoptera species		Tree	Lepidoptera species
Oak (<i>Quercus</i>)	519		Sumac (<i>Rhus</i>)	55
Cherry, plum (<i>Prunus</i>)	485		Persimmon (<i>Diospyros</i>)	48
Willow (<i>Salix</i>)	386		Hackberry (<i>Celtis</i>)	47
Birch (<i>Betula</i>)	381		Honey Locust (<i>Gleditsia</i>)	44
Aspen, poplar, cottonwood (<i>Populus</i>)	331		Sycamore (<i>Platanus</i>)	44
Maple, box elder (<i>Acer</i>)	293		Buckeye (<i>Aesculus</i>)	37
Crabapple (<i>Malus</i>)	287		Blackgum (<i>Nyssa</i>)	36
Hickory (<i>Carya</i>)	244		Sweetgum (<i>Liquidambar</i>)	36
Pine (<i>Pinus</i>)	243		Juniper (<i>Juniperus</i>)	34
Alder (<i>Alnus</i>)	232		Sassafras (<i>Sassafras</i>)	30
Hawthorn (<i>Crataegus</i>)	166		Redbud (<i>Cercis</i>)	24
Basswood, Linden (<i>Tilia</i>)	160		Magnolia (<i>Magnolia</i>)	20
Walnut (<i>Juglans</i>)	141		Tulip Tree (<i>Liriodendron</i>)	20
Beech (<i>Fagus</i>)	134		Fringe Tree (<i>Chionanthus</i>)	10
Spruce (<i>Picea</i>)	128		Pawpaw (<i>Asimina</i>)	10
Dogwood (<i>Cornus</i>)	124		Catalpa (<i>Catalpa</i>)	9
Serviceberry (<i>Amelanchier</i>)	113		Silverbell (<i>Halesia</i>)	9
Ironwood (<i>Ostrya</i>)	97		Smoketree (<i>Cotinus</i>)	5
American Hornbeam (<i>Carpinus</i>)	76		Kentucky Coffee Tree (<i>Gymnocladus</i>)	3