

Enclave Butterfly Garden Report: Black Swallowtail
Article and artwork by Elizabeth White Olsen, GO Native Landscaping



Over the past year, we've seen several Eastern Black Swallowtails at Enclave Butterfly Garden. They're especially fond of the garden's Pentas and Zinnias. This butterfly has large wings and long "tails" like those of—you guessed it: swallows.

Black is an uncommon color in nature, and it's especially rare in butterflies. These Swallowtails are a particularly arresting sight on a hot summer day. Because, *How could anything dare to be black, and to look so lovely and relaxed, when it's 100 degrees?* They're like a piece of night escaped into day. They'll stop you in your tracks—They're a swath of black velvet studded with lemon yellow, sky blue, and orange, yet alive and flying!

In April 2025 we are adding a yellow wildflower, Golden Alexander, to the garden. This is one of the Black Swallowtail's host plants (the plant its caterpillars eat), so we should start seeing even more Black Swallowtails, along with its caterpillars munching on the flower's leaves. If you'd like to attract this butterfly to your yard, try planting Dill, Fennel, or Parsley herbs, which Black Swallowtail also uses as host plants. But don't freak out when you see yellow, black, and lime-green striped "worms" on your new plants. Instead, delight in them! What you're seeing is not a worm, but a caterpillar. The Black Swallowtail you sought to attract liked your yard well enough to lay an egg (see block print of Swallowtail laying egg). The egg hatched into a caterpillar, which means you've got baby butterflies!

It's also a good idea to plant nectar flowers such as Pentas and Liatris, as the Black Swallowtail mother has flown a long way to find your herbs and she will be wanting some refreshment. Or if you're not ready to get your hands dirty, come look for Black Swallowtail at Enclave Butterfly Garden at 3600 Mesa Drive above Pool 2, or what everyone calls "the small pool."