

Habitat Construction

NOTE: A class set of 30 painted lady butterfly larvae should be ordered for delivery in time to move into the habitats on Day 2. Be sure to check delivery instructions on the Carolina Biological website (or the vendor of your choice).

<https://www.carolina.com/butterfly-cultures/painted-lady-butterfly-30-larvae-class-set-living/971510.pr?question=butterfly+larvae>

TO THE TEACHER: We have provided instructions for constructing low-cost shoebox habitats. Alternatively, the teacher may choose to purchase premade butterfly habitats. **Each team will need its own habitat for observation.**

Materials needed for each habitat:

- cardboard shoebox (1 box per team)
- box cutter or Canary cardboard saw
- tulle or garden fine mesh netting (You will need enough for each habitat. Please be sure it is **fine mesh** so that the larvae cannot crawl through! Both tulle and fine garden mesh are reasonably priced and available through Amazon or garden supply stores. White or clear mesh netting makes observations easier.)
- collection of sturdy twigs or small branches (2–3 for each habitat)
- **fresh plants and leaves** (a handful for each team; painted lady caterpillars eat a variety of plants, such as asters, daisies, and zinnias as well as some that are considered weeds: thistles, dandelions, mallows, hollyhock, alfalfa, and clover.)

NOTE: Fresh plants and leaves provide a source of food and water the larvae; because of this, it will be important to add fresh leaves every day!

BEFORE YOU BEGIN CONSTRUCTION WITH THE CHILDREN:

- Decide where the team's habitats will be located (either in a central location or near the team's table). Habitats should be at eye level for easy observation. **Teams will need easy access to handle and measure larvae.**
- **Avoid direct sunlight and drafts!**
- Using a cardboard shoebox, remove the top and you have one large window already! Next, cut out one window on the bottom of the shoebox and a smaller access flap (for accessing larvae and adding leaves) on one side; this flap can later be secured with a small piece of tape



- Measure the size of the front and back windows to decide how much netting you will need for each box. Allow about 2.5 cm (1 inch) overlap for taping. Secure firmly with duct tape.



- Prepare a plastic bag with leaves, 2–3 twigs or small branches, and a paper towel. Children will add these to the habitats on Day 2, along with the larvae. See a finished habitat below.

