

# What's in a Name?

The scientific name for the **American Beech** is *Fagus grandifolia*. In Latin, *Fagus* means "beech," *grandis* means "large," and *folium* means "leaf." Just how big are beech leaves?

Take a walk and look for an American Beech. Pick one leaf and use it to make a leaf rubbing in your nature journal. (You keep a nature journal, right? If not, now's the time to start!) Use a ruler to measure and record the length and

width of the beech leaf. Look for leaves from other kinds of trees and make rubbings of them, too. Are they bigger or smaller than your beech leaf? Does the American Beech really deserve the name "Large Leaf"?



*To find beeches at the Arboretum, take a stroll along the Tuckahoe Creekside. Need some help with identification? Watch our introduction to American Beech video.*

## HOW TO MAKE LEAF RUBBINGS

1

Position leaves vein side up on a flat hard surface (it may be helpful to place a piece of paper under your leaves).

2

Lay a piece of plain white paper on top of your arranged leaves.

3

Using a crayon (peel off the wrapper and turn the crayon on its side), gently rub it over the top piece of paper.



**Can't make it to the Arboretum and don't have beech trees nearby?** *What other natural materials can you make rubbings with?*

PHOTOS: SCHOOLHOUSE FARMHOUSE (TOP), CATBIRD338/STOCK.ADOBE.COM (BOTTOM)



# Wild Edibles

In late August through October, be on the lookout for beechnuts, the fruit of the **American Beech**.

Beechnuts have prickly, triangle-shaped shells with two to three nuts inside. These nuts begin to ripen in late August and can be harvested through October. Along with other tree nuts and acorns, they are also called mast and are an

important food source for wildlife, including foxes, raccoons, wild turkeys, ruffed grouse, possums, squirrels, deer, pheasants, and black bears.

Beechnuts are also edible for humans. As with any wild food, it is best to proceed with caution and, if unsure, have an experienced forager confirm your find. Beechnuts should only be sampled when ripe (not green) and in small quantities to ensure no adverse reactions. Remember to remove the outer prickly husk before tasting.



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## TIPS FOR RESPONSIBLE FORAGING

1

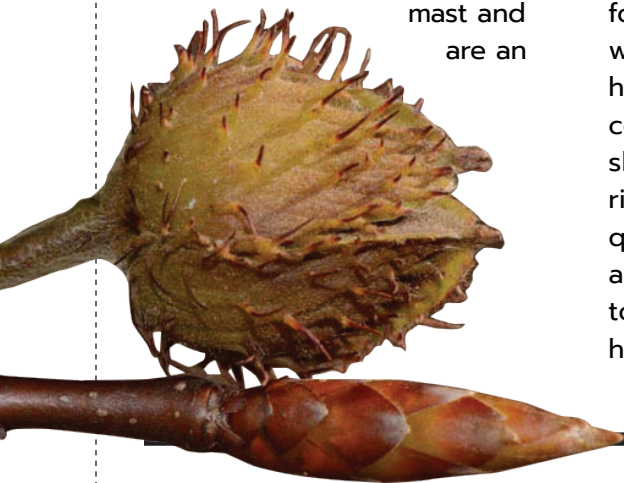
Never forage on private property or in a place where you do not have permission.

2

Don't harvest an entire crop—this can have adverse effects on plant health and wildlife populations.

3

Always forage at your own risk and don't eat anything you are unsure of or unfamiliar with.



## SEE IT, DRAW IT!

Take a walk among the American Beech trees at the Arboretum. Observe the trees and the wildlife around them (remember to be quiet so you don't scare the animals away).

Draw some of the animals that feed on beechnuts in your nature journal. Didn't see any animals? Look at the list above and draw them along with an American Beech tree.



**Can't make it to the Arboretum and don't have beech trees nearby?**  
*What other trees and plants are a source of food for wildlife?*

PHOTOS: JULIE MAKIN/LADY BIRD JOHNSON WILDFLOWER CENTER (TOP), JAMES L. REVEAL/LADY BIRD JOHNSON WILDFLOWER CENTER (LEFT)



monarch caterpillar on milkweed

# Perfect Pairings

The **American Beech** provides food for the larvae (caterpillars) of over 100 species of butterflies and moths!

One of these, the Early Hairstreak butterfly (pictured, right), is quite rare. These lovely blue, black, and orange butterflies lay their eggs on the underside of the foliage that their caterpillars like to eat—namely, American Beech leaves! This is an example of an insect/host relationship. All insects depend on host plants for the food they need to survive and thrive.



is an example of a food chain.

For an up-close look at insect/plant relationships, find a small tree in your backyard or in a nearby park. Spread a light-colored sheet around the base of the tree and gently shake its lower leaves. You'll be amazed at the number of insects that will land on your sheet. Sketch them in your nature journal, then repeat the experiment with another type of tree. Did you find any different insects the second time around?

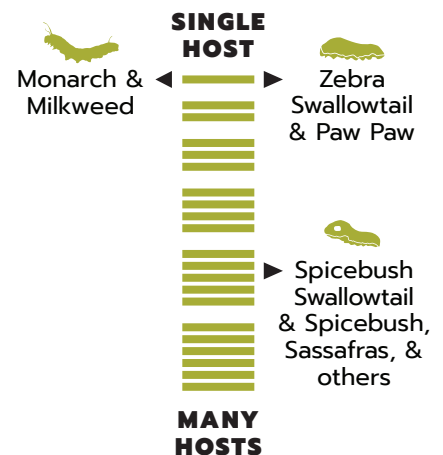
When Early Hairstreak caterpillars hatch, they attract insects like spiders and wasps to the American Beech in search of their favorite food: caterpillars! These insects have an important role—keeping the tree from becoming overwhelmed by leaf-munching larvae. The transfer of energy (food) from leaves to caterpillars to other insects



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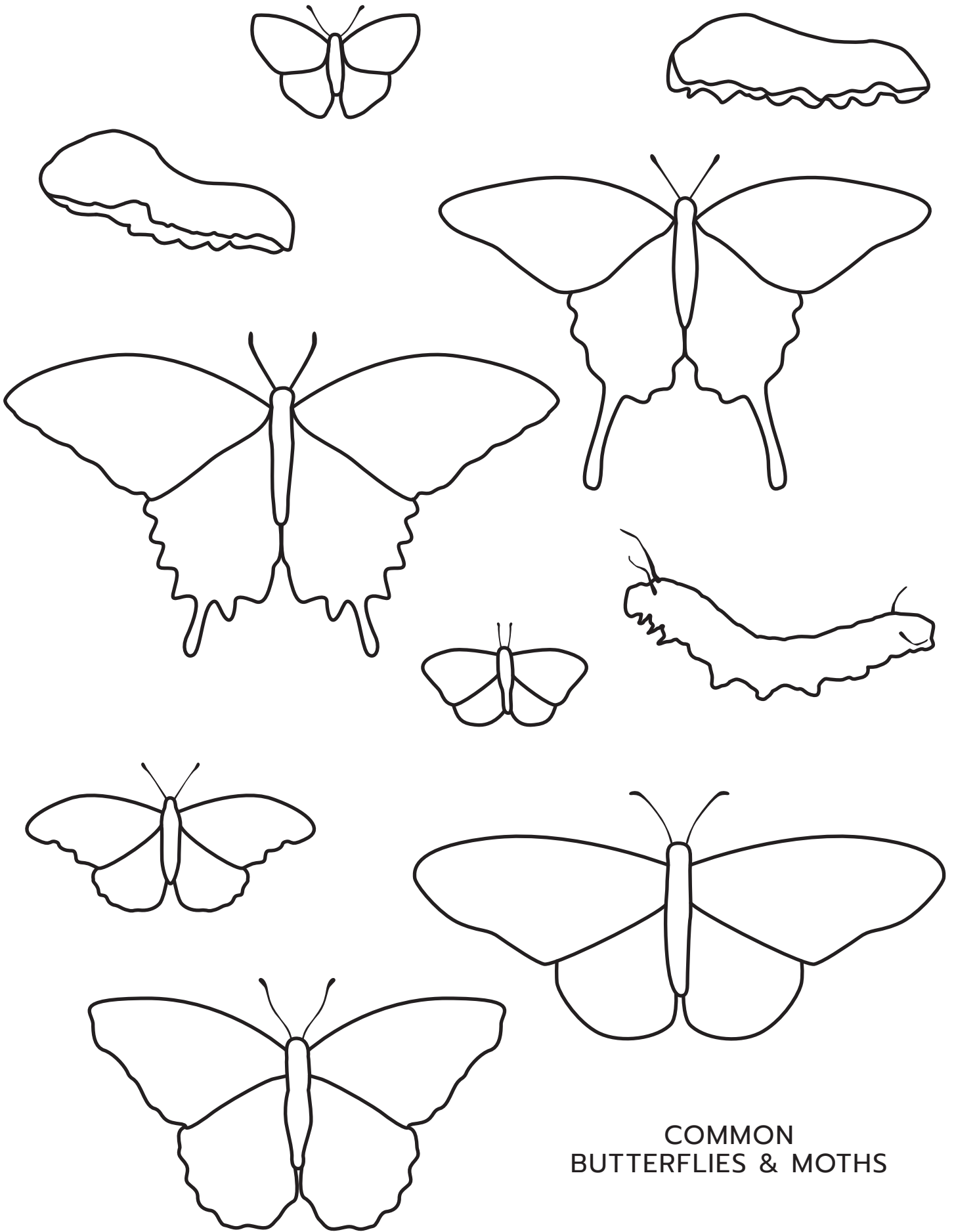
## PICKY EATERS

Some insects have only one or two host plants, while others have many. Where do you fall on the picky eater scale?



**Can't make it to the Arboretum and don't have trees nearby?** Use our common butterflies and moths sheet to create paper pollinators and decorate them to resemble some of the perfect pairings listed above.

PHOTOS: KELLEN MCCLUSKEY (TOP), K.P. MCFARLAND/CC BY-NC 2.0 (MIDDLE)



COMMON  
BUTTERFLIES & MOTHS