Art Supply and Entomological Supply List for Illustrating Pollinators for Botanical Art: Butterflies

Art Supplies

This is not a beginner class, so artists are expected to bring materials suited to their preferred working methods. While I encourage independent decision-making, it's important to be fully prepared. Below is a recommended list of art supplies to help ensure a smooth experience.

- **Drawing Tools:** Mechanical pencil + lead refills (fine emory board to sharpen), foam eraser, artistic ball burnisher (embosser), and tracing paper.
- **Color & Rendering:** Watercolor or colored pencils (if working in color).
- **Paper:** If working in graphite, bring quarter sheets of professional cotton drawing paper. If working in color, hot press watercolor paper (such as Stonehenge Aqua) is recommended.
- **Other Essentials:** drawing board, daylight balanced light source, handheld magnifier (ex. 10x magnifying lens, hastings triplet magnifier, or digital portable microscope), ruler, proportional dividers, and/or any additional tools you rely on for precise observation and mark-making.

The goal is to think critically about your materials—choose what will best support your process as you engage in scientific observation and artistic interpretation.

Entomological Supplies

Pinning Kit (Amazon – $15.99) https://a.co/d/2dKgKu5

- Includes 100 insect pins (size #2), insect pinning board, spreading wings pressing paper, tweezers, scissors, and an insect display case

Butterfly Specimen (BicBugs – Precis coenia (Buckeye Butterfly) – $6.00)

For a more meaningful connection to your subject, please **select a butterfly native to Virginia** to deepen your understanding of local pollinators and their ecological role. This helps ground your study in place and strengthens your connection to the species around you. Great options include the **tiger swallowtail (*Papilio glaucus*)**, **monarch (*Danaus plexippus*)**, **gulf fritillary (*Agraulis vanillae*)**, and **buckeye (*Precis coenia*)**.

Your **specimen must be purchased unpinned**, and proper **hydration and preparation steps must be followed before class** to ensure it's ready for pinning and observation. You're free to purchase from any reputable vendor, but **BicBugs is offering a discount** if you choose to order from them.

- Use code DIDIUS at checkout for 10% off one purchase at BicBugs (only valid for one purchase per account)!
- Unpinned specimen (you may want to purchase two or three to ensure you have a few back ups to study. Legs, antennae's, and heads are delicate and brittle and have a tendency to break)
- Our class has a special discount code thanks to BicBugs! Use code DIDIUS at checkout for 10% off one purchase at BicBugs.com (only valid for one purchase per account)!

Reference Book Suggestions

Clara's Suggestions:

The Life Cycles of Butterflies by Judy Burris & Wayne Richards

- Get to know the life cycles of 23 common butterflies in the Southeast. Includes detailed images of each life phase from egg to adult butterfly, as well as additional acts and natural history information. This book is useful to recognize or identify native butterflies, host plants, and immature forms (eggs, caterpillars, and pupae) from Virginia.

Do Butterflies Bite? By Hazel Davies & Carol A. Butler

- Find answers to all the strangest and most interesting butterfly and moth questions! From physical anatomy to typical or atypical behaviors- this book has everything you need to understand the basic ins and outs of butterflies. Useful for learning more in depth about how butterfly bodies work and getting a beginners understanding of butterfly movement.

Stephey's Suggestions:

How Insects Work: An Illustrated Guide to the Wonders of Form and Function from Antennae to Wings by Marianne Taylor

Gardening for Butterflies: How You Can Attract and Protect Beautiful, Beneficial Insects by The Xerces Society

---

Preparing Your Butterfly Specimen for Class

Students will need to **purchase an unpinned butterfly specimen and an entomological pinning kit** before class. To ensure your specimen is ready for pinning and observation, it must be **properly hydrated** before arrival.

Use code DIDIUS at checkout for 10% off one purchase at BicBugs (only valid for one purchase per account)!

How to Hydrate Your Butterfly Specimen:

1. **Create a Hydration Chamber:**
    - Use an airtight container (like Tupperware or a glass jar with a lid).
    - Place **a damp paper towel** or a small sponge inside to maintain moisture.
    - Avoid direct contact between the butterfly and the wet material to prevent damage.
2. **Rehydrate the Specimen:**

- Gently place the butterfly in the chamber.
- Seal the container and let it sit at **room temperature for 24–48 hours**.
- Check periodically—wings and legs should become flexible but not oversaturated.

3. **Test Readiness:**
   - If the wings and body move gently without breaking, it's ready for pinning.
   - If still brittle, let it sit a bit longer.
4. **Freeze Specimen:**
   - After the specimen is rehydrated, remove the wet towel or sponge and place the container in the freezer to freeze the specimen.
   - This will preserve the moisture until it is ready for use.
5. **Thaw Specimen:**
   - 1 hour before class starts, remove the specimen from the freezer and allow to thaw so it is ready for pinning.

For a **step-by-step walkthrough**, watch this **video by Bic Bugs**:
https://youtu.be/SoCgg1LaQuo

Course description:

Illustrating Pollinators for Botanical Art: Butterflies

A Three-Day Intensive Workshop on the Form and Function of Butterflies

This workshop is designed to deepen your understanding of butterflies beyond basic anatomy. Rather than simply identifying the head, thorax, and abdomen, we'll explore how leg structures, mouthparts, and flight patterns reveal a butterfly's purpose, personality, and ecological role. By studying the epitome of form and function, artists will gain insight into how these elements create life in motion.

Over three intensive days, we'll take time to slow down and observe, syncing hand, eye, and mind through drawing. Instead of rushing to complete a portfolio-ready piece, you'll create a meaningful, well-designed observational recordthat serves as a foundation for future work.

Through scientific pinning and preservation, you'll learn to store and pin specimens for identification—not as they appear in life, but for scientific accuracy. We'll also discuss how to use resource videos and photos correctly while prioritizing drawing from life, refining your ability to translate real-world observations into marks on paper.

What to Expect:

- Approach learning through inquiry-based methods, using discussion and hands-on exploration.
- Develop confidence in drawing by training your eye to see and interpret form.
- Examine butterflies up close with microscopes and hand lenses.
- Engage in group discussions that spark curiosity and deeper learning.
- Draw constantly, capturing movement, form, and structure through repetition.

This class bridges visual art, science, and ecology, guiding botanical artists to illustrate not just the beauty of nature, but its deeper purpose—capturing form, function, and the interconnected roles of pollinators through careful observation and mark-making.