

Island Marble Butterfly Habitat Host FAQs

1. When will butterflies arrive at habitat plots?

This depends on several factors. Butterflies have dispersed quite a bit this year, but there are a couple of main points to consider.

- a. Currently the only known population of island marble butterflies is in the vicinity of American Camp and Cattle Point. Plots that are close to American Camp are most likely to become occupied.
- b. There are plans to translocate island marble butterflies to Lopez Island and possibly to plots further afield from American Camp. Current efforts are working toward creating habitat that can support translocation.

2. When is the flight season?

mid-April to mid-to-late June

3. If there is mustard on your property, can you use it for seed?

No, currently the only seed being used is seed that originally was collected from field mustard, *Brassica rapa*, growing at American Camp. Field mustard can have quite a bit of variability as a species, and within species variability is also an important source of diversity. Considering that store-bought field mustard seed could be very different from American Camp mustard, at this time out of caution, we are only using seed that was originally sources from American Camp where we know the island marble butterfly does well on host plants growing there.

4. When should plots be mowed?

If it is before the flight season and the plot is unoccupied, mow if you would like until mid-April when flight season begins. Leave the part of the plot that has host plants in it un-mowed from mid-April until August to grow tall grass for larvae to crawl off of host plants into the grass. If the plot is unoccupied, then any activity is possible in any part of the plot. If the plot is occupied, then a buffer of 13 ft. from host plants is established to protect vegetation where chrysalises (pupae) are or may be overwintering. Areas outside of the buffered area may be disturbed to establish host plants the following year.

5. Should anything be done about encroaching grass during the winter?

Encroaching grasses are something that needs to be perennially addressed, but this is addressed through cultivation in the spring and fall. Tillage, putting down cardboard, and adding soil, or using landscaping fabric or plastic are all ways to prep. soil for seeding,

but nothing needs to be done at other times of the year about grass encroachment. The host plants require soil disturbance or cultivation to grow, which is the point at which dealing with encroaching grass is addressed.

6. Are nectar plants available to plant?

Yes. While the single most important component of island marble habitat at this stage of recovery is protection for host plants, other requirements include nectar plants, open area to disperse, variability in habitat type, and topographical features for dispersal. We have planted nectar plants in many plots. Nectar plant establishment can be difficult in some circumstances, but there are nectar plants that tend to do well. If you are interested in planting nectar plants, please let the Conservation District, Ecostudies Institute, or USFWS know, and we will help you incorporate more host plants into your plot. Additionally, often cover crops are used which are helpful for other pollinators.

7. What do island marble eggs look like?

At first, they are clear with a light-blue tinge or a translucent white. Within about twenty-four hours they turn bright orange. Over time they may appear red. Eggs are slightly oblong and have slight linear creases from end to end. When eggs have fully developed, a black dot will appear at one end of the egg, which will become the head of the first instar larvae that hatches from the egg.

8. Are there other butterflies that look like the island marble butterfly?

Yes, there is a look-alike, another white butterfly that can be found in island marble habitat, the cabbage white butterfly, *Pieris rapae*, which also prefers mustard host plants. This butterfly has more of a fluttery flight path than the island marble butterfly, which flies in a quicker, more direct line. The cabbage white has a black dot and light black or gray markings on the dorsal side of the wings, but the ventral hindwing is a creamy white color. This is compared to the green and yellow marbling on the dorsal hindwing of the island marble butterfly. Even though this marking is distinctive of the island marble butterfly, a pair of binoculars can be very useful to make out the marbling.