

FLIGHT CAGES: *SOME ALTERNATIVES*

So you have, or want, a caterpillar kit! Congratulations! As you may know, your little caterpillars are eating and pooping machines, and basically like to be left alone in a private place where they feel safe until they emerge from their chrysalis. The housing for that is provided with your caterpillar kit. But! Once your caterpillars have formed a chrysalis, you will need something bigger for them to emerge into (the adults need space).

Professionally made flight cages can be a little expensive (our professional ones, that are black, start at \$24.00). Those also make good choices for other projects but we totally acknowledge that the cost can be a barrier! So, if you'd prefer an alternative, here are some popular choices, including a craft-based one that is a fun project with kids:



IKEA OR SIMILAR LAUNDRY HAMPER

The fabric cylinder ones seem to be **the most popular-cost effective alternative to a professional cage**. We see them in classes everywhere! They're bright and collapsible, very affordable, and relatively easy to see through. The holes in most brands are small enough that the butterflies cannot escape. You need to make sure whatever laundry style hamper you buy closes securely: adult butterflies are escape artists despite their big clumsy wings and will wiggle out of any small space they can.

Note: these are not appropriate for rearing anything that eats small prey, such as mantis nymphs: you will have flies everywhere! They are also not parasite or parasitoid proof.

HANDMAKE YOUR OWN – DIY!

It's easy to repurpose something you might have in your home. Here is how to craft a small one:

1. Using a sturdy cardboard box, cut out panels on 2-4 of the front and sides. Leave a margin of at least two inches from the edges of the box for sturdiness.
2. Cut a piece of mesh (aka tulle cloth or bridal netting) the same as each side of the box that you have cut out. Leave yourself lots of extra for overlap.
3. Attach the netting firmly into position on the inside of the box with duct tape or hot glue (no need to take the whole box like in the picture – just secure the mesh well)
4. Tape or glue that little lid, or the paper towel from the kit (with the chrysalis attached to it) inside of this container. **Do not get glue or tape on the chrysalis!**



AQUARIUMS/CRITTER KEEPERS (*caution*)

This is our least favorite choice unless done with careful consideration, because they can be dangerous: butterflies cannot walk on smooth surfaces like glass or plastic, and if they emerge in a container that has smooth walls, they can fall, and they will not be able to get back up and recover, which means they may perish. It's therefore critical that the walls are something rough for them to climb on: mesh or fabric is best, or wood, etc. If in a pinch, you can use an aquarium or critter keeper in a pinch but **make sure you line it with something for them to walk on**, such as mesh, fabric, or even paper towel.

These work great with larger mantis though! Once fly or prey-proofed, you can plant a whole little ecosystem in here: be sure not to use any treated plants or soils however.

ORDER ON AMAZON

Amazon has some cheap alternatives, though we can't speak to the quality of the cage itself. Amazon is hard on small businesses like hours, and very unsustainable. But this is an accessible option if you are on a budget! We support your choice.



As always, enjoy your time with the bugs! We are very enthusiastic about sharing our expertise if you need help. If you find that you have encountered an issue not covered by your full instructions, make sure to get in touch with us immediately!

Butterfly Wings N' Wishes

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