

## Turtleheads and Baltimore Checkerspot Butterflies

If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.

- Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Turtlehead - *Chelone glabra*



Photo courtesy of NPS

<http://www.nps.gov/plants/pubs/Chesapeake/plant/1359.htm>

**Other common names:** Balmony, Snake head; turtle bloom; shell flower; Salt-rheum

**My *Chelone* has first name:**

Chelone <Kel OH nee>  
rhymes with <Ba-LOH-ney>

...and baloney describes the myth associated with her in Greek mythology. Because she refused to attend the *social event of the season*: the marriage of Zeus to Hera, they turned her into a tortoise.

**We are family:** *Scrophulariaceae*  
**Relatives:** lousewort, mullein, monkey flower; butter and eggs; foxglove; Indian paint brush; owl's clover, princess tree, *Veronica*

**The hostess with the most-est:**  
Perennial in nature, there is a new cultivar named 'Hot Lips'! :-)

**There was sign of forced entry:**  
Because of the flower's design, turtlehead relies upon large bees for cross-pollination. It takes a strong stroke for any winged one to force its way into the tubular flower, never mind forcing aside the stamen to get at the nectar.

*You got a problem with my stiff upper lip?:*

Flowers are a two-lipped blossom formed from five fused petals on a dense spike. Colors range from whitish pink to rosy but no noticeable fragrance. The leaves are oblong, smooth, and opposite arrangement on the stem.

### TURTLEHEAD

*If bees are the preferred visitors of the turtle-head, why do we find the Baltimore butterfly, that very beautiful, but freaky, creature (*Melitaea phaeton*) hovering near? - that is, when we find it at all; for where it is present, it swarms, and keeps away from other localities altogether. On the under side of the leaves we shall often see patches of its crimson eggs. Later the caterpillars use the plant as their main, if not exclusive, food store. They are the innocent culprits which nine times out of ten mutilate the foliage.*

- Mrs. Neltje Blanchan, 1900

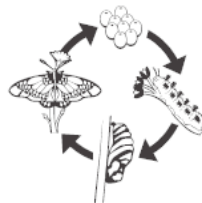
### Caterpillar Café:

Baltimore Checkerspot  
(*Euphydryas phaeton*)  
Maryland's State Insect

*You'll have to "fen" for yourself:*

Both checkerspot butterflies and turtlehead plants have been in severe decline in MD and DC areas.

This is primarily due to the destruction of wet woods and meadows for construction of townhouses.



clockwise: Egg-larva-pupa-adult

Drawing: [www.marylandzoo.org](http://www.marylandzoo.org)



Baltimore Checkerspot photo by Alison Hunter, wikipedia.org

**Be a good-host host:** Baltimore checkerspots feed primarily on turtlehead foliage but in its absence, they will feed on plantains and beardtongue penstemons.

**Eggs:** Reddish in color when first laid; later becoming beige prior to hatching.

**Larvae:** Early instar caterpillars build silky nests and feed on turtlehead leaves until later in the summer. Before a killing frost, they exit the plant to spend the winter burrowed in leaf litter or underground. They return to active foliage feeding in the spring to mature and form their chrysalis.

**Pupae:** For two weeks, it is one of nature's jewels - an inch long chrysalis of creamy white with orange and black markings. *It resembles a concoction from Charlie's Chocolate Factory!*

**Adult:** The Baltimore Checkerspot butterfly is said to be named for the 17th-century American colonist George Calvert, the first Lord Baltimore whose crest was orange and black. It is mostly black with orange and creamy-white spots arranged as a checkered pattern, hence its name.

Who could forget the delightful border of tiny orange half moons below a series of creamy crescent moons!

No larvae? No butterflies.  
No way, no how.