

The Gulf Fritillary Caterpillar vs. the Oleander Caterpillar: How to tell them apart

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Homeowners often confuse the caterpillar stage of the Gulf Fritillary butterfly (*Agraulis vanillae*) with that of the Oleander moth (*Syntomeida epilais*). This side-by-side comparison guide will help you learn to tell the difference between these two colorful creatures.

Gulf Fritillary Butterfly

- **Caterpillars:** Bright orange with black branched spines.
- **Adults:** Bright orange with black markings, they are found all year in Florida.
- **Host Plants:** Passion flowers (*Passiflora incarnata*)
- **Pest Potential:** Caterpillars damage host plants but typically will not kill them.



Photo Credit Jaret C. Daniels, University of Florida



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Oleander Moth

- **Caterpillars:** Orange with clumps of back hairs resembling bristles.
- **Adults:** Mimic the look of a wasp but are harmless.
- **Host Plants:** Oleander (*Nerium oleander*) and Desert Rose (*Adenium obesum*)
- **Pest Potential:** Caterpillars damage host plants but typically will not kill them.



Photo Credit Paul Choate, University of Florida



Photo Credit James Castner, University of Florida

For additional information on these insects, including information on control, please visit:

Gulf Fritillary <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in804>

Oleander Caterpillar <https://trec.ifas.ufl.edu/mannion/pdfs/OleanderCaterpillar.pdf>

<https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/lake/>