

Asclepias incarnata

Swamp Milkweed

Asclepias incarnata (Swamp Milkweed) is a Great Lakes native plant that is best known as a host plant for the Monarch Butterfly. Large, terminal clusters of mauve pink flowers bloom from July to August and attract a wide variety of bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. The tall, unbranching stems mingle nicely with sedges, Asters, and Bonesets. Swamp milkweed performs best in full sun and moist to wet conditions, making it a striking addition to rain gardens, swales, or pond edges. Like other milkweeds, the milky sap deters herbivores. Swamp milkweed is also a beautiful cut flower with a lightly sweet, almost vanilla scent. As fall approaches, upright candelabra-like seed pods form that burst with feathery white, buoyant seeds. The seed heads and stalks remain upright until heavy snowfall, providing interesting architectural winter form. If stems are left into spring, birds will shred the fibrous stems and use the soft material for nesting. Native bees can use the hollow stems for nesting as well.

Botanical Name: *Asclepias incarnata*

Common Name: Swamp Milkweed

Family: Apocynaceae

Nativity: Great Lakes Native

USDA Zone: 3 to 8

Light Type: Full Sun to Part Shade

Soil Type: Loam, Clay, Sand

Soil Preferences: Prefers wet soil and clay but tolerates range of conditions

Soil Moisture: Moist to Wet

Typical height (ft): 3-4'

Typical width (ft): 2-3'

Foliage: Green

Bloom Time: July, August

Bloom: Pale to rich mauve pink with white centers; fragrant

Ecological features: Host plant for Monarch butterfly caterpillars; attracts bees, butterflies, and other pollinators; birds use stem fibers as nesting material in spring

Tolerance of: Deer, salt

Additional notes: Native to swamps and wet meadows; Can tolerate light shade; flowers are lightly fragrant

Companion plants: Bonesets (*Eutrochium* spp.), Asters (*Symphotrichum* spp.), Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*), Sedges (*Carex* spp.), Culver's Root (*Veronicastrum virginicum*)

For more information see:

<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=g410>

<http://www.newmoonnursery.com/plant/Asclepias-incarnata>

<https://www.midwestgroundcovers.com/plant/Asclepias-incarnata-NGN>

<https://www.americanmeadows.com/wildflower-seeds/milkweed-seeds/swamp-milkweed-seeds>

https://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/wetland/plants/sw_milkweed.htm

Images of *Asclepias incarnata*



Swamp_milkweed_(*Asclepias incarnata*)_Sand_Lake_Wetland_Management_District_01_(14386831375).jpg

Plant form in natural community



Swamp Milkweed *Asclepias incarnata* Flowers Side 2635px.jpg
Flower structure



Swamp Milkweed *Asclepias incarnata* Insect Front 3008px.jpg
Massed plants



Monarch_Butterfly_Danaus_plexippus_Vertical_Caterpillar_2000px.jpg
Monarch caterpillar on seed pod



Milk2.jpg

Silky bursting seed pod

Image choices for narrative:

Swamp_milkweed_(Asclepias_incarnata)_Sand_Lake_Wetland_Management_District_01_(14386831375).jpg

Plant form in natural community

Monarch_Butterfly_Danaus_plexippus_Vertical_Caterpillar_2000px.jpg

Monarch caterpillar on seed pod