

Asclepias purpurascens Purple Milkweed

Asclepias purpurascens (Purple Milkweed) is a floral beauty and pollinator magnet for the early summer garden. The milkweeds are best known as host plants for the Monarch Butterfly, so if you see small nibbles in the leaves, it's time to celebrate! Similar in appearance to common milkweed, Purple Milkweed produces geometric globes of hundreds of tiny, star-shaped flowers that provide a delicate floral scent in June and July. The rich rose-purple flowers attract a wide variety of bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. Flower globes develop on top of strongly upright stems (2-3' tall) with large (6" long), bold leaves that appear leathery. After the flowers are spent, slender, velvety seed pods begin to form, which eventually burst with light, feathery seeds. The dried seed heads provide upright, structural interest through sparkling frost and light snow. In spring, birds use the fibers of dried stems to build nests. Purple Milkweed prefers part shade conditions, but can tolerate full sun with more soil moisture. Herbivores avoid browsing this plant because of its milky, toxic sap. This plant tends to decline after flowering, so plant it with companions like Boneset, Bottle Gentian, and Little Bluestem that can take the spotlight in late summer.

Botanical Name: *Asclepias purpurascens*

Common Name: Purple Milkweed

Family: Apocynaceae

Nativity: Great Lakes Native

USDA Zone: 3 to 8

Light Type: Full Sun to Part Shade

Soil Type: Loam, Clay

Soil Preferences: mesic; will require Part Shade in dry soils

Soil Moisture: Dry to Moist

Typical height (ft): 2-3'

Typical width (ft): 1-3'

Foliage: Green to Dark Green

Bloom Time: June, July

Bloom: Rose-pink to purple

Ecological features: Attracts bees and butterflies; Spring stems provide nesting material for birds and native bees.

Tolerance of: Some drought, Deer, Salt

Additional notes: Larval host for monarch butterflies; root system is fleshy taproot & rhizomes; takes 3+ years to flower but worth the wait, handsome foliage in the meantime

Companion plants: Bonesets (*Eutrochium* spp.), Bottle Gentian (*Gentiana andrewsii*), Culver's Root varieties (*Veronicastrum* spp.), Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), Coneflowers (*Echinacea* spp.), meadow grasses

For more information see:

https://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/savanna/plants/pur_milkweed.htm

<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?taxonid=276864>

<https://www.prairiemoon.com/asclepias-purpurascens-purple-milkweed-prairie-moon-nursery.html>

<https://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/flower/purple-milkweed>

Images of *Asclepias purpurascens*



A_C_IMG2910.jpg

Plant in context



asclepias_purp_fr2.jpg
Velvety young seed pods



Purple Milkweed *Asclepias purpurascens* Flower Heads Wide 2300px.jpg
Bloom development sequence



Purple Milkweed *Asclepias purpurascens* Buds.jpg
Buds



Purple_Milkweed_*Asclepias purpurascens*_Cluster.jpg

Flower detail



Purple_Milkweed_Asclepias_purpurascens_Young_Plants_3008px.jpg
Spring leaves

Image choices for narrative:

Purple Milkweed Asclepias purpurascens Flower Heads Wide 2300px.jpg
Bloom development sequence

asclepias_purp_fr2.jpg - Velvety young seed pods