

Asclepias tuberosa Butterfly Weed

Asclepias tuberosa (Butterfly Weed) bears striking flat clusters of orange and yellow flowers in summer above its glossy, dark green foliage. The flowers attract and provide nectar to wide variety of pollinators. By fall, the slim, green upright, candelabra-like seedpods split open in and release seeds with silky tails that make them airborne. The pods remain to provide strong fall through winter interest. Butterfly Weed is a larval host plant of the milkweed specialist – the Monarch Butterfly but unlike other milkweeds, it is without the milky sap. It is a clump forming, erect species grows 1-3 feet tall (including upright pods) and 1.5 – 2 feet wide. Butterfly Weed grows best in full sun on all soil types if well drained. The native species is deer resistant and tolerates drought, salt and heat. It combines well with many species including Tall Coreopsis, Rough Blazing Star, Sweet Coneflower, Prairie Dropseed, and Little Bluestem.

Botanical Name: *Asclepias tuberosa*

Common Name: Butterfly Weed

Family: Apocynaceae

Nativity: Eastern and southern United States

USDA Zone: 3 to 9

Light Type: Full Sun

Soil Type: Sand, Loam and, if well drained, Clay

Soil Preferences: Prefers drier, sandier, well drained

Soil Moisture: Dry to Moist

Typical height (ft): 1-3'

Typical width (ft): 1.5' – 2'

Foliage: Dark Green

Bloom Time: June - July

Bloom: Orange

Ecological features: Pollinator resource, larval host plant of the Monarch Butterfly, erosion control

Tolerance of: Drought, Deer, Salt, and Heat

Additional notes: Plants are slow to emerge late in the spring; candelabra of vertical tan pods through winter; deep taproot makes transplanting difficult.

Companion plants: Tall Coreopsis (*Coreopsis tripteris*), Blazing Star (*Liatris aspera*), Sweet Coneflower (*Rudbeckia* spp.), Blue False Indigo (*Baptisia australis*), Sage (*Salvia* spp.), ornamental grasses like Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), Prairie Dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*)

For more information see:

<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=b490>

<https://wimastergardener.org/article/butterflyweed-asclepias-tuberosa/>

https://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/prairie/plantx/btf_milkweedx.htm

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

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

Images of *Asclepias tuberosa*



Butterfly Weed *Asclepias tuberosa* and Monarch Caterpillar 2056px.jpg Monarch Caterpillar on Butterfly Weed



Asclepias tuberosa 002.JPG
Flower buds and opening flowers



Asclepias tuberosa seeds 002.JPG
open seed pods in early fall



Butterfly Weed Asclepias tuberosa Unopened Buds 2816px.JPG
Unopened Buds



632px-Butterfly_Weed_Whole_Flowering_Plant_1676px
plant morphology



Butterfly_Weed_Asclepias_tuberosa_Young_Plant_1938px.jpg
emerging young plants

Image choices for narrative:

Butterfly Weed *Asclepias tuberosa* and Monarch Caterpillar 2056px.jpg
Asclepias tuberosa seeds 002.JPG open seed pods in early fall