

All About MILKWEED

Milkweed is a flowering plant essential to the life cycle of the monarch, as it is the sole source of food for the caterpillars. The survival of the butterfly depends on the accessibility of this host plant. An important part of Monarch monitoring is to identify and map milkweed in Canada.

Named for its milky white sap. It is a fragrant plant and has many traditional uses, such as using the stems for making rope and textiles. Most species will flower from June to August.



Dwarf Milkweed *Asclepias ovalifolia*

Flower colour: White

Height: Single stem grows 60cm tall

Appearance: flowers arranged in loose cluster. Leaves are opposite and egg shaped, with fine hairs underneath.

Habitats: parklands and prairies

Swamp Milkweed *Asclepias incarnata*

Flower colour: Pink

Height: 30-150cm tall

Appearance: flowers occur in clusters; the leaves are opposite and lance-shaped with smooth edges.

Habitats: forests, prairies, roadsides, wetlands



Showy Milkweed *Asclepias speciosa*

Flower colour: Pink

Height: Grows 150cm tall

Appearance: flowers occur in umbrella shaped clusters. Leaves are opposite and oval-shaped with noticeable veins.

Habitats: Prairies, roadsides, streambanks

Common Milkweed *Asclepias syriaca*

Flower colour: Pink or Purple

Height: Grows 150cm tall

Appearance: flowers arranged in a cluster; leaves are opposite and oval-shaped - dark green on top and light green on the underside.

Habitats: old fields, roadside, waste places, and disturbed sites (rare in prairies)

Green Milkweed *Asclepias viridiflora*

Flower colour: Green or White

Flowering Months: June to August

Height: Grows 80cm tall

Appearance: small greenish-white flower clusters; has broad, opposite leaves that are blunt at both ends.

Habitats: woodlands, dry prairie hillsides, roadsides

Whorled Milkweed *Asclepias verticillate*

Flower colour: White or Green

Flowering Months: May to September

Height: Grows 50cm tall

Appearance: small flowers occur in flat topped cluster at the upper stem. Narrow, linear leaves are whorled along the stem.

Habitats: woodland, dry fields, roadsides



If you would like more information, please contact Phoenix Combe, the Métis Climate Monitoring Coordinator at phoenix.combe@mmf.mb.ca