

NATIVE MILKWEED IN CANADA

POKE MILKWEED

Asclepias exaltata



STEM

Glabrous (smooth), pale green to purplish green, 60 to 150 cm. Can potentially reach 180 cm under favorable conditions.

FLOWERS

Green-white to pink, arranged in drooping umbels with long pedicels. Blooms have a strong, pleasant scent.

LEAVES

Opposite, 5 to 25 cm long, with pointy tips and pubescent (hairy) undersides.

FRUITS

Linear and lance-shaped follicles, pubescent, up to 15 cm long.

HABITAT

Moderately moist soil rich in organic matter, along forest edges and in clearings. Tolerates shade.

DISTRIBUTION

Ontario, Quebec.



Photos: Michel Tremblay

NATIVE MILKWEED IN CANADA

SWAMP MILKWEED

Asclepias incarnata



STEM

Pubescent (hairy), from 60 to 150 cm tall.

FLOWERS

Red or purplish-pink umbels.

LEAVES

Narrow, tapered, 8 to 15 cm long, arranged in opposite pairs.

FRUITS

Long, narrow and smooth follicles, 5 to 8 cm in length.

HABITAT

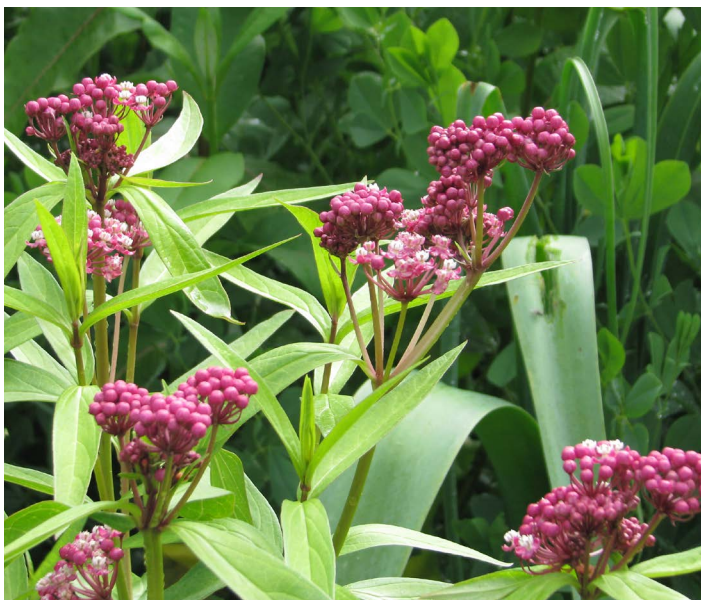
Wetlands. Also found in swamps, ditches and near streams, rivers, and lakes.

UNIQUE FEATURE

Often scattered – does not form dense colonies.

DISTRIBUTION

Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island.



Photos: Patrick Alexander, Pegnum

NATIVE MILKWEED IN CANADA

DWARF MILKWEED

Asclepias ovalifolia



STEM

Simple (unbranched) and pubescent (hairy), 30 to 60 cm tall.

FLOWERS

Greenish-white or pale mauve corolla; the corona is generally white to creamy white. Flowers are arranged in umbels.

LEAVES

Opposite, oval, with pointy tips, 5 to 8 cm long.

FRUITS

Smooth and thin, spindle-shaped follicles covered with fine hairs. The follicles measure 6 to 8 cm in length.

HABITAT

Sandy soil, but tolerates other soil types with good drainage. Prefers roadsides, dry and sunny conditions.

DISTRIBUTION

Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario.



Photos: Justin Meisen, msieges

NATIVE MILKWEED IN CANADA

SHOWY MILKWEED

Asclepias speciosa



STEM

Velvety or pubescent (hairy), 45 to 120 cm tall.

FLOWERS

Whitish-pink to purple, arranged in umbels. The corona hoods are long (9 to 13 mm) and lance-shaped, making the flowers look like stars.

LEAVES

Opposite, 10 to 20 cm long, smooth or slightly pubescent.

FRUITS

Large, warty, pubescent cylindrical follicles, 7.5 to 11 cm long.

HABITAT

Moist to well-drained soils, sunny sites, pastures, forest edges, abandoned fields, roadsides, ditches, riverbanks.

DISTRIBUTION

British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba.



Photos: Matt Lavin, Daniel Atha

NATIVE MILKWEED IN CANADA

COMMON MILKWEED

Asclepias syriaca



STEM

Pubescent (hairy), usually single, 100 to 150 cm tall. Underground stems.

FLOWERS

Pale pink or mauve, arranged in almost spherical umbels. Blooms have a strong, pleasant scent.

LEAVES

Broad and thick, 10 to 20 cm long, pubescent on the underside. Pairs of leaves are oriented perpendicular to each other in alternation on the stem.

FRUITS

Large follicles of 8 to 12 cm in length, spindle-shaped, bumpy, rough, and pubescent.

HABITAT

Poor, dry soil, disturbed and sunny sites.

DISTRIBUTION

Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island*, Newfoundland*.

*Milkweed is considered introduced in these two provinces



Photos: Sonya Charest, Andy Wilson

NATIVE MILKWEED IN CANADA

BUTTERFLY MILKWEED

Asclepias tuberosa



STEM

20 to 60 cm tall.

FLOWERS

Bright orange-yellow, arranged in umbels.

LEAVES

Alternate on the stem (not opposite to each other), lance-shaped, 5 to 12 cm long, smooth on top and pubescent (hairy) below.

FRUITS

Pubescent and spindle-shaped follicles, 8 to 12 cm long.

HABITAT

Limestone soils, open, rocky, dry sites. Does not tolerate shade. Prefers well-drained soils and tolerates drought.

UNIQUE FEATURE

Does not produce a milky sap (latex) but rather a watery and transparent sap.

DISTRIBUTION

Ontario, Quebec.



Photos: Brett Whaley, Frank Mayfield

NATIVE MILKWEED IN CANADA

WHORLED MILKWEED

Asclepias verticillata



Photo: Aaron Carlson

STEM

Angled, pubescent (hairy) or glabrous (smooth), 30 to 90 cm tall.

FLOWERS

White corona and greenish corolla. Flowers are arranged in umbels.

LEAVES

Elongated and narrow, almost threadlike, 5 to 8 cm long. Leaves grow in groups of 3 to 6 and are arranged in a circular pattern (whorl) around the stem.

FRUITS

Elongated and lance-shaped, 7 to 10 cm long. Smooth and glabrous or pubescent.

HABITAT

Dry, infertile soils.

DISTRIBUTION

Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario.

NATIVE MILKWEED IN CANADA

GREEN MILKWEED

Asclepias viridiflora



STEM

Pubescent (hairy), green to purplish, 30 to 90 cm tall.

FLOWERS

Arranged in often downward-facing umbels, pale green sometimes tinged with violet. Unlike other milkweed species, the flowers of this species have no corona hoods.

LEAVES

Arranged in opposite pairs on the stem. Vary in shape depending on the habitat where the plant is found. They may be long and narrow (dry environments) or broader and oval (wetland). The leaf edges may sometimes be wavy.



FRUITS

Smooth and lance-shaped follicles, 7 to 13 cm long, glabrous (smooth) or covered in fine and short hairs.

HABITAT

Poor, dry, sandy or rocky soils. Can also be found in more humid environments, such as marshes. Tolerates full sun to moderate shade.

DISTRIBUTION

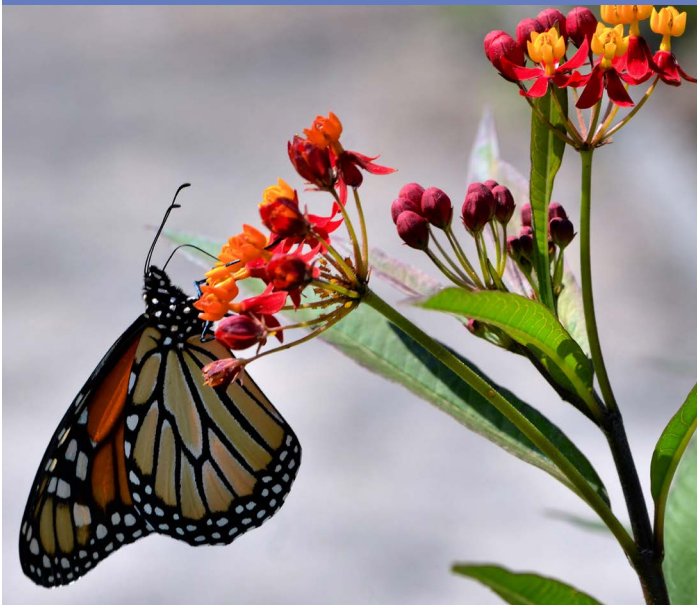
Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario.

Photos: Unknown, Matt Lavin

EXOTIC MILKWEED IN CANADA

BLOODFLOWER (TROPICAL MILKWEED)

Asclepias curassavica



STEM

Grey-green, glabrous (smooth) from 70 to 100 cm tall.

FLOWERS

Eye-catching orange-red and yellow blooms that last into September. Under ideal conditions (tropics), it can bloom all year round.

LEAVES

Opposite and lance-shaped, smooth, sometimes with a white coloration along the central vein. They can measure up to 15 cm in length.

FRUITS

Long and narrow, 7 to 10 cm in length.

HABITAT

In gardens (ornamental plant in North America). Prefers a sunny environment.

DISTRIBUTION

The Caribbean, Central and South America, Mexico.

Ornamental plant cultivated as an annual in Canada (cannot tolerate Canadian winters) or as an indoor plant.



Photos: André Sarrazin, Gilles Murray

EXOTIC MILKWEED IN CANADA

BALLOON PLANT

Gomphocarpus physocarpus, syn. *Asclepias physocarpa*



STEM

Erect habit, up to 180 cm tall.

FLOWERS

Umbels of pubescent (hairy) flowers white to pink-violet. They release a vanilla smell.

LEAVES

Opposite, long, narrow and lanced-shaped. Slightly pubescent, pale green in colour, and up to 10 cm long.

FRUITS

Light green, round, balloon-like fruit covered with soft bristles. Fruit is eye-catching and different from other milkweeds.

HABITAT

In gardens (ornamental plant in North America). Tolerates dry to moderately moist soil and likes full sun.

DISTRIBUTION

South Africa, Swaziland, and Mozambique. Ornamental plant cultivated as an annual in Canada (cannot tolerate Canadian winters).



Photos: Missouri Botanical Garden