



# Native Milkweeds of Canada

Milkweed, a flowering plant of the genus *Asclepias*, has unique crown-shaped flowers in green, white, pink or orange, and oval seed pods.

There are 14 species of milkweed found throughout Canada, in all provinces except Newfoundland and Labrador, and the territories. Most milkweed species are currently classified as uncommon or rare, but they are beginning to make a comeback through intentional planting efforts.

Milkweed is essential to Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) survival because it's the sole food source for Monarch caterpillars. It's also a host to Monarch eggs and a nectar source for butterflies.



# Milkweed Ranges



			<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <span style="background-color: #f0f0f0; border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px 5px;">none</span> <span style="background-color: #d8bfd8; border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px 5px;">rare</span> <span style="background-color: #800080; border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px 5px;">uncommon</span> <span style="background-color: #4b0082; border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px 5px;">common</span> </div>								
	SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	PE
1	<i>Asclepias exaltata</i>	Poke Milkweed									
2	<i>Asclepias hirtella</i>	Tall Green Milkweed									
3	<i>Asclepias incarnata</i> **	Swamp Milkweed									
4	<i>Asclepias lanuginosa</i>	Wooly Milkweed									
5	<i>Asclepias ovalifolia</i>	Oval-leaved Milkweed									
6	<i>Asclepias purpurascens</i>	Purple Milkweed									
7	<i>Asclepias quadrifolia</i> *	Four-leaved Milkweed									
8	<i>Asclepias speciosa</i>	Showy Milkweed									





			none	rare	uncommon	common					
	SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	PE
9	<i>Asclepias sullivantii</i>	Sullivant's Milkweed					rare				
10	<i>Asclepias syriaca</i> **	Common Milkweed			rare	uncommon	common	uncommon	uncommon	uncommon	uncommon
11	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	Butterflyweed					uncommon	rare			
12	<i>Asclepias verticillata</i>	Whorled Milkweed			rare	uncommon	rare				
13	<i>Asclepias viridiflora</i>	Short Green Milkweed		rare	uncommon	uncommon	rare				



- Royal Botanical Gardens Canada.** Growing milkweed in Ontario. [www.rbg.ca/growing-milkweed-in-ontario/](http://www.rbg.ca/growing-milkweed-in-ontario/)
- Canadian Wildlife Federation.** [www.cwf-fcf.org/en/resources/encyclopedias/flora/milkweed.html](http://www.cwf-fcf.org/en/resources/encyclopedias/flora/milkweed.html)
- CWF native seed calculator and guide.** [www.cwf-fcf.org/en/resources/downloads/booklets-handouts/native-seed-calculator-and.html](http://www.cwf-fcf.org/en/resources/downloads/booklets-handouts/native-seed-calculator-and.html)

\* *Asclepias quadrifolia* is Endangered in Ontario

\*\* *Asclepias syriaca* and *Asclepias incarnata* are the preferred milkweeds of Monarch butterflies

# Identifying mature Common Milkweed



## How to ID milkweed

- Pair of leaves coming off stem
- Parallel, light veins
- If leaf is torn will exude white milky sap
- Note the pair of oblong leaves, arranged on stem in pairs
- Sometimes confused with Spreading Dogbane (*Apocynum androsaemifolium*) or Joe Pye weed (*Eutrochium maculatum*).



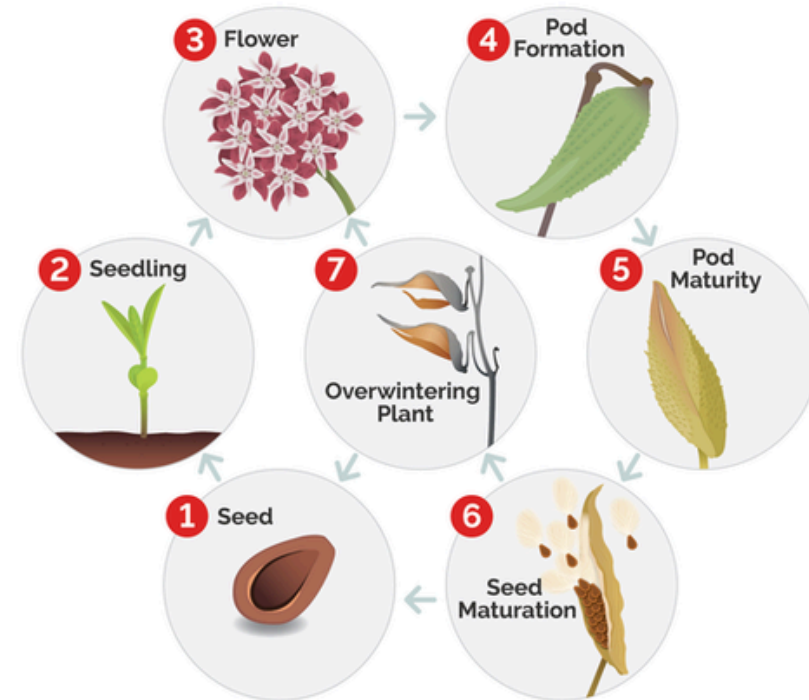
Spreading Dogbane  
(*Apocynum androsaemifolium*)



Joe Pye weed  
(*Eutrochium maculatum*).

Common Name: Common Milkweed  
Scientific Name: *Asclepias syriaca*

# Milkweed lifecycle



Milkweed grows in a variety of habitats including open fields, prairies, forests, shorelines, and even rocky and sandy regions. Some species also thrive along roadways.

Not all milkweeds are readily available as seeds. If you're planning a meadow project in Ontario, refer to CWF's seed calculator to determine which milkweeds are a good fit for your region and site conditions.