

Swamp milkweed

(*Asclepias incarnata*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms.

Sometimes known as Pink milkweed, Swamp milkweed is an erect, herbaceous perennial with striking blooms that makes an excellent addition to a moist, sunny landscape. It is excellent for attracting butterflies and other pollinating insects, and it the larval host monarch, queen and soldier butterfly caterpillars. It occurs naturally in floodplain swamps, hydric hammocks, wet pine flatwoods and marshes, and typically blooms in summer.



Hummingbird clearwing (*Hemaris thysbe*) on *Asclepias incarnata*.
Photo by Mary Keim

Swamp milkweed's showy pink flowers are slightly fragrant. They are born in compact terminal or axillary umbels. Individual flowers have reflexed corollas and an upright corona — a characteristic typical of milkweed flowers. Leaves are long (up to 6 inches), elliptic to lanceolate, and glabrous. They are oppositely arranged. Stems are stout, glabrous and multi-branched. Seeds are flat and brown with silky white hairs attached. They are born in follicles that split open when ripe. Seeds are dispersed when their silky hairs catch the wind.

The genus *Asclepias* is named for Asclepius, the Greek god of healing, because some *Asclepias* species, such as *A. tuberosa*, are known to have medicinal properties.

Family: Apocynaceae (Dogbane family)

Native range: Most peninsular counties, Wakulla County

To see where natural populations of Swamp milkweed have been vouchered, visit www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.

Hardiness: Zones 8A–10B

Soil: Wet to moderately dry soils

Exposure: Full sun to minimal shade

Growth habit: 3–6'+ tall, not as wide

Propagation: Seed

Garden tips: Swamp milkweed is one of the most striking native milkweeds. It makes an excellent addition to moist, sunny landscapes, but can tolerate occasional drought once established.

Caution: All milkweeds contain a toxic latex sap that may irritate skin.

Swamp milkweed are often available from nurseries that specialize in Florida native plants. Visit www.PlantRealFlorida.org to find a nursery in your area.