

Longleaf milkweed

(*Asclepias longifolia*)

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

Longleaf milkweed is a deciduous perennial wildflower that occurs naturally in bogs, moist to wet flatwoods and prairies. It typically blooms in spring but may bloom well into summer or early fall.

Longleaf milkweed flowers are born in axillary or terminal umbels. Each flower bears a five-lobed calyx and five-lobed corolla, both of which are whitish-green with purple tips. Calyx lobes are reflexed. Leaves are long (up to 6 inches), linear to narrowly lanceolate (up to 3/8-inch wide) and sessile. They have small hairs scantily distributed along margins, over the upper surface and along veins of the lower surface. Leaves may be oppositely or alternately arranged. Stems are slender, rigid and slightly pubescent. Seeds are born in erect, smooth follicles that measure 3½ inches or longer.



Photo by Eleanor Dietrich

The genus *Asclepias* is named for Asclepius, the Greek god of healing. The species epithet *longifolia* literally translates to “long leaf,” hence the common name.

Like all members of the *Asclepias* genus, Longleaf milkweed is a larval host plant for Monarch and Queen butterflies. The plant contains a milky latex-like substance that is toxic to most animals, but Monarchs and Queens are adapted to feed on them despite the chemical defense. The flowers are an important nectar source for bees and wasps.

Family: Apocynaceae (Dogbane family)

Native range: Panhandle west of Jefferson County, western peninsula from Citrus south to Monroe and Miami-Dade counties, and eastern peninsula from Seminole north to Nassau counties

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

Hardiness: Zones 7–10b

Soil: Moist to wet soils

Exposure: Full sun to minimal shade

Growth habit: Up to 28” tall

Longleaf milkweed plants are not commercially available. Visit a natural area to see them.