

Butterfly milkweed

(*Asclepias tuberosa*)

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

Butterfly milkweed is a perennial that produces large, showy clusters of bright orange to reddish flowers. Petals are distinctly downturned. Stems are rough to hairy, and leaves are narrowly lanceolate, and oppositely arranged. *Asclepias tuberosa* is an exception to the *Asclepias* genus in that its stem does not contain the milky latex that distinguishes the rest of the genus and gives it the common name “milkweed.”

Butterfly milkweed flowers from spring through fall. It occurs naturally in sandhills, pine flatwoods, and other sandy uplands as well as along sunny roadsides. It is the larval food plant of monarch and queen butterflies. It also attracts hummingbirds, bees and other pollinators.

Butterfly milkweed is sometimes referred to as pleurisy root because Native Americans chewed the root of the plant to treat pleurisy. Today, it is commercially available as an extract and as a dried root powder.

Family: Apocynaceae (Dogbane family)

Native range: Nearly throughout

To see where *Butterfly milkweed* occurs naturally, visit florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.

Hardiness: 7–10

Soil: Well-drained, sandy soil

Exposure: Full sun

Growth habit: 1–3' tall, with 1–2' spread

Propagation: Seed, division, cuttings

Garden tips: Butterfly milkweed is an excellent addition to butterfly gardens as well as any dry, hot landscape.

Butterfly milkweed seeds may be available through the Florida Wildflowers Growers Cooperative www.FloridaWildflowers.com. Plants are occasionally available at nurseries that specialize in native plants. Visit PlantRealFlorida.org to find a native nursery on your area.



Photo by Mary Keim