

# Longleaf milkweed

(*Asclepias longifolia*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary\\_of\\_botanical\\_terms](https://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.

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, Queen and Soldier butterflies. The plant contains a milky latex that is toxic to most animals, but Monarch, Queen and Soldier caterpillars 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 have been vouchered, visit [www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu](http://www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu).*

**Lifespan:** Perennial

**Soil:** Moist to wet soils

**Exposure:** Full sun to minimal shade

**Growth habit:** Up to 28"

Longleaf milkweed is not commercially available. Visit a natural area to see it.



Photo by Emily Bell