

Savannah milkweed

(*Asclepias pedicellata*)

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

With its diminutive stature and greenish-yellow flowers, Savannah milkweed is oft overlooked in its native pineland and prairie habitats. It blooms late spring through fall, peaking in summer. Its flowers are attractive to bees, wasps and butterflies. Like all members of the *Asclepias* genus, Savannah 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.



Photo by Emily Bell

Savannah milkweed's urn-shaped flowers are five-petaled and deeply lobed. Atypical of most milkweed species, the lobes are not reflexed. Flowers are erect, pedicellate and born in loose axillary or terminal clusters. Leaves are linear, sessile and oppositely arranged. Lower leaves are reduced in size. Stems are slim and somewhat pubescent. Seeds are born in erect follicles that dry and split open as the fruit matures. Each seed is attached to a white silky pappus that catches the wind and aids in dispersal.

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. The species epithet *pedicellata* refers to the pedicellate flowers.

Family: Apocynaceae (Dogbane family)

Native range: Nearly throughout

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

Lifespan: Perennial

Soil: Moist, well-drained sandy soils

Exposure: Full sun to high pine shade

Growth habit: 6–12" tall

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



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