

# COMMON MILKWEED

(*Asclepias syriaca*)



The name "milkweed" refers to the toxic, white sap that oozes from a broken stem or leaf.

Common Milkweed grows from seed and underground rhizomes.

Opposite leaves

Fragrant flowers and nectar attract many pollinators.

One pod contains about 200 seeds.

Seeds are dispersed by the wind.

## "Two Bags Save One Life"

During WWII school children helped the war effort in collecting 1.5 billion milkweed pods to fill life jackets. A little over a pound of the cotton-like milkweed floss could keep a soldier afloat over 40 hours.



### SEED SEEDLING - VEGETATIVE BUDDING - FLOWERING FRUITING - SEED DISPERSAL

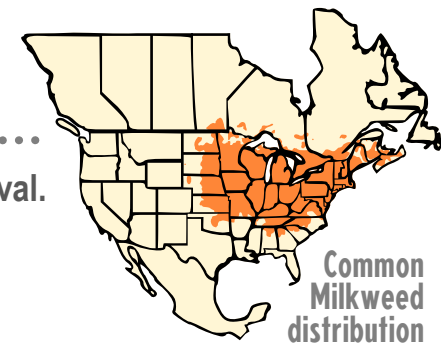
What makes good habitat? Having easy access to food, water, cover, and space to support growth and survival.

### IT TAKES A VILLAGE...

Producing one migratory monarch requires about 29 milkweed plants since butterflies have a survival rate of 1-2%. Their main host plant, Common Milkweed, isn't as common as it used to be. Scientists say everyone's help is needed to help restore the massive amount of milkweeds needed for monarch recovery efforts. To reach the goal of 225 million monarchs by 2020 we need 1.5 billion new stems of milkweed. Plant milkweed for monarchs!

### MILKWEED DEPENDS ON DISTURBANCE

Common Milkweed is a sun loving, pioneer plant that grows throughout the eastern U.S. in a variety of soils types. While somewhat difficult to grow from seed, Common Milkweed can also produce new shoots from underground rhizomes. Large colonies form in response to disturbances such as fire and grazing. Early successional habitats that support Common Milkweed also provide excellent food and cover for pheasants, quail, and other wildlife.



**6.4 MILLION SEEDS** MILKWEED AMOUNT PLANTED BY PHEASANTS FOREVER SINCE 2012.

**450 INSECT SPECIES** NUMBER OF SPECIES THAT FEED ON COMMON MILKWEED.

**>90%** PERCENTAGE OF SUMMER BREEDING MONARCHS USING COMMON MILKWEED.

Pheasants Forever is dedicated to the conservation of pheasants, quail and other wildlife through habitat improvements, public awareness, education and land management policies and programs.

For more information visit [pheasantsforever.org](http://pheasantsforever.org)

# TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1.) **True / False:** Milkweed is only useful to monarchs.

2.) **True / False:** Common Milkweed can reproduce vegetatively.

3.) **True / False:** The name milkweed is related to dairy cows.

4.) **True / False:** Common Milkweed is native to my home state.

5.) **True / False:** Pioneer plants rebuild communities after a disturbance.



GOT HABITAT? Draw a few milkweed pollinators in the box.



## WHO KNEW THERE WERE SO MANY MILKWEEDS?

Natural selection has led to the evolution of 76 native milkweed species in the United States! Each species occupies an ecological niche, defined by a range of tolerable conditions such as soil type, sun exposure, temperature, and moisture level. While all plants need water, Swamp Milkweed is one of the few milkweed species that can grow in wetlands and rain gardens. Dry and sandy environments are better-suited for species like Sand Milkweed.

Recognize any of these milkweeds? Chances are, one of them is growing in a nearby habitat. Visit [plantmilkweed.org](http://plantmilkweed.org) to learn more.



Swamp Milkweed  
*Asclepias incarnata*



Whorled Milkweed  
*Asclepias verticillata*



Showy Milkweed  
*Asclepias speciosa*



Green Milkweed  
*Asclepias viridiflora*



Butterfly Milkweed  
*Asclepias tuberosa*



Antelope Horns Milkweed  
*Asclepias asperula*