

Butterfly Milkweed *Asclepias tuberosa*

Plant Type: Native Perennial Wildflower

Sun Exposure: Sun, Part Sun

Season of Interest: Summer, Fall

Bloom Time: Summer

Bloom Color: Bright Orange

Height: 12 to 24 in.

Spread: 12 to 16 in.

Spacing: 16 in.

Water Needs: Average

Maintenance: Very Little

Soil Type: Clay, Loam, Sandy, Rocky

Soil pH: Acidic, Neutral

Soil Drainage: Well Drained

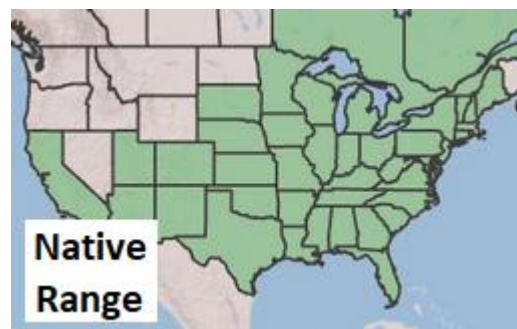
Pests: Aphids

Diseases: Leaf spot

Wildlife: Bees, Butterflies



Description: Butterfly milkweed is an easy-to-grow herbaceous perennial wildflower. It's a must-have plant for gardeners looking to coax beneficial insects into the garden. This clump-forming perennial grows from tuberous roots to a height of one to two feet and is characterized by glossy-green, lance-shaped leaves and clusters of bright orange-to-yellow blooms that are rich with nectar and pollen. Its clusters of bright orange-yellow flowers will display from late spring until late summer for about two months. Butterfly milkweed is considered mildly toxic to animals. But because it has much lower levels of the toxic sap found in other milkweeds and is regarded as a safer plant in homes with pets.



Monarch butterfly caterpillars feed exclusively on the leaves of milkweeds, the only host plant for this iconic species. As such, milkweed is critical for the survival of monarchs. Without it, they cannot complete their life cycle and their populations decline. Eradication of milkweed both in agricultural areas as well as in urban and suburban landscapes is one of the primary reasons that monarchs are in decline today. For more information see: plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/asclepias-tuberosa .

Care and Growing Tips: Choose a spot in your garden with lots of bright sunlight daily, full sun is definitely best for flowering. Butterfly milkweed can prosper in a variety of soil conditions and compositions, from sand to gravel, and it generally prefers a neutral to slightly acidic pH. For the first 6 weeks after transplanting you should maintain a moist soil environment, giving it about one inch of water per week through combined rainfall and irrigation. Once the plant appears to be well-established, you can cut back to watering it only occasionally, as it now prefers dry soil. An extensive, deep taproot helps it thrive even in dry conditions. Mature plants can do well with just monthly watering in all but the driest climates.

Butterfly milkweed thrives in a variety of different temperature and humidity settings, growing well in zones 3 to 9. Generally, the plant emerges in late spring, hitting its peak bloom during the warmer summer months. It handles high humidity and arid climates equally well, provided it gets adequate soil moisture. It is a low-maintenance plant that does not require any additional fertilization.