

Supporting Plants & Where to find seeds.

Introduction: The Milkweed plant is mostly associated with the Monarch Butterflies and their survival as a species. The Milkweed comes in eight different variants of the milkweed species. That said, Common and Swamp Milkweed are the two species we will consider, as they are the most common. If you are interested in learning more about all Milkweed species, please visit the Canadian Wildlife Federation website. They have a very cool chart and a two-page presentation just on Milkweed plants. You can find it on their webpage at <https://cwf-fcf.org>

Common Milkweed: One of the Milkweed plants that people associate with the Monarch Butterflies in New Brunswick is the Common Milkweed. This is a tall plant species that sometimes forms large clones. The umbels bear large balls of pink to purplish flowers that have an attractive odour. Among the milkweeds, this species is the best at colonizing in disturbed sites. Within its range, it can be found in a broad array of habitats from croplands, to pastures, roadsides, ditches and old fields. The plant grows to a height of 0.91 to 1.52 m, but can reach up to 2.4 m.

The Milkweed plant contains cardiac glycosides, related to digitalis, used to treat some heart diseases. These glycosides, when absorbed by monarch butterfly larvae whose sole source of food is milkweed foliage, make the larvae and adult butterflies toxic to birds and other predators. Which is an incredible natural defensive measure, “you are what you eat”.

The flower is highly fragrant and varies from white to pinkish, sometimes purplish. The individual flowers are about 1 cm in diameter, each with five horn-like hoods and five pollinia. The seeds, each with long, white, flossy hairs, occur in large follicles.

Size: up to 2.4m

Flower Colour: white, pink and purple.

Hardiness Zone: 3 to 7

Fragrant: Strong floral smell like vanilla or cotton candy

Locations found: Croplands, to pastures, roadsides, ditches and fields.



Swamp Milkweed

(*Asclepias Incarnata*)

likes to clump when growing and does not spread as aggressively, making it a better selection for your garden. It thrives in the sun to partial shade and loves wet and moist ground like ditches and shorelines. They can live in moist soils such as New Brunswick has to offer with its wetlands. This plant has narrow leaves and pinkish flowers grown in bunches or clusters. The Swamp Milkweed is a great addition to the typical New Brunswick pollinator garden. I have several garden boxes full. We grow food for us and food for the bugs and birds in New Brunswick, LOL.



Swamp Milkweed

As beautiful as the swamp milkweed is, sometimes the plants can take several years to fully produce flowers when grown from seeds. Blooming and releasing its fragrant smell during the summertime, the swamp milkweed plant attracts various insects and pollinators, specifically monarch butterflies.

Milkweed Toxicity: The white sap is toxic to the majority of animals when consumed in large quantities. With Monarch Laying their eggs on the underside of the plant's thick leaves, the butterflies use this toxin to their advantage, because birds leave them alone.

Swamp Milkweed is not considered aggressive or invasive in its native range. It can spread through self-seeding.

Size: 2.4m

Flower Colour: Light pink to deep purple.

Hardiness Zone: 3 to 7

Fragrant: Strong floral smell like vanilla or cotton candy

Locations found: Full sun and consistently moist to wet soil.



Safety to consider: Milkweed can also cause irritation to your skin or eyes. It is recommend wearing garden gloves when handling them. Wash your hands with soap and water if you have touched or handled milkweed and avoid contact with your eyes.

Other plants that support butterflies and provide nectar.



Goldenrod Yellow flowers; provides an essential late-summer and fall nectar source.



Purple Violet: Is the New Brunswick flower, blooms from May-July.



Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)



Purple-stemmed Aster



Blueberry flowers produce sweet, accessible nectar that attracts butterflies.



Haskap flowers produce nectar

Wild Raspberry



Trees

- Willow Trees: One of the earliest spring bloomers, providing crucial early nectar.
 - Basswood Trees Famous for producing monofloral “basswood honey” due to its heavy, sweet summer nectar flow.
 - Pin Cherry Trees Blooms in spring, providing an early food source for bumblebees and butterflies.
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Where to pick them up

- Scott’s Nursery in Lincoln, they have the Northern Wildflowers seeds.
 - Rowans Greenhouses also in Lincoln have Milkweed seeds, as I understand it.
 - Co-op Country in St. Mary’s St Fredericton, I think they have some.
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Online



<https://northernwildflowers.ca>

Excellent Online supplier, very good price and very fast delivery.

<https://www.naturenb.ca/monarchs/milkweed-seeds/>

General and detailed information links

Canadian Wildlife Federation (Milkweed Species of Canada) Booklets and Handouts. Excellent document and very well designed with loads of information. (Link below)

<https://cwf-fcf.org/en/resources/downloads/booklets-handouts/Milkweed-Species-of-Canada-update-3.pdf>

Parks Canada

<https://parks.canada.ca/pn-np/mb/riding/nature/flora/l-asclepiade-milkweed>

Monarch Watch org. Very interesting paper written by David J. White - R.R. #3 - Lanark, Ontario, 13 March 1996.

https://www.monarchwatch.org/read/article_canweed.html

Royal Botanical Gardens Canada, Dated September 10, 2020 by Karin Davidson Taylor, Education Officer, Royal Botanical Gardens. Article

<https://www.rbg.ca/growing-milkweed-in-ontario/>
