

Common milkweed

Asclepias syriaca L.



Life cycle

Stoutly erect, patch-forming perennial.

Leaves

Opposite, oval, oblong to egg-shaped leaves are 3 to 8 inches long with smooth margins and distinctly white midveins and veins. The upper leaf surface is dark green and usually smooth; the lower leaf surface is pale green and finely hairy. Leaves exude a milky sap when damaged.

Stems

Stout and erect, rarely branched, up to 6-foot-tall herbaceous stems are finely hairy and hollow and exude a milky sap when damaged.



Young common milkweed plant.



Common milkweed flower clusters.



Common milkweed leaf.

Flowers and fruit

Purple, pink to white flowers are found in dense, ball-like clusters consisting of 20 to 130 individual flowers. Fruit are large, 3- to 5-inch-long, grayish green, teardrop-shaped pods covered with soft, warty bumps. Pods split open at maturity to release thin, brown, oval seeds each with a tuft of long, silky hairs that aid in wind dissemination.

Reproduction

Seeds, creeping roots and rhizomes.



Common milkweed fruit.



Mature fruit and seeds of common milkweed.

Asclepiadaceae (Milkweed family)