Common milkweed

Asclepias syriaca L.

Life cycle

Stoutly erect, patch-forming perennial.

Leaves

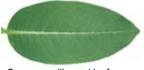
Opposite, oval, oblong to egg-shaped leaves are 3 to 8 inches long with smooth margins and distinctly white midveins and veins. The upper leaf surface is dark green and usually smooth; the lower leaf surface is pale green and finely hairy. Leaves exude a milky sap when damaged.

Stems

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



Common milkweed flower clusters.



Young common milkweed plant.

Common milkweed leaf.

Asclepiadaceae (Milkweed family)

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.

