

Showy Milkweed

(Asclepias speciosa)



Flora
Fauna



How to Identify:

- 1 to 3 feet tall
- Rosey-purple and pink star shaped flowers.
- The flowers make up a circular flower head (Umbel) which measures about 3 inches across.
- Once blooming it produces seed pods up to three inches long.

Showy milkweed contains a milk looking substance that you can see when the leaves or stem is broken.



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Habitat:

- Showy Milkweed enjoys full or nearly full sun.
- Tolerates drought and soils that are low in nutrients.
- You can often find them in pastures, meadows, forest clearings, and ditch banks

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Fun Facts!

- Milkweed is the only host plant to Monarch Butterfly caterpillars. As such, Milkweed is vital to the survival of the Monarch species.
- Seed pods contain many seeds connected to a cottony floss. This allows the seed to spread by wind similarly to a dandelion.
- The milk like substance tastes bitter and is poisonous to humans and animals. This bitterness is what makes Monarch Butterflies bitter tasting and protects them from predators.



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Help Save the Milkweed!

- Planting Milkweed seed is a great way to help. Milkweed comes in several varieties, check your planting zone and plant Milkweed that is native to your region.
- In late summer check with your State Parks Visitor Center to see if there is Milkweed seed available.
- Avoid herbicides when possible. The same herbicide that kills other weeds kill Milkweed as well.

ACTIVITY TIME

1. Look up different varieties of Milkweed. See which ones are native to your area.
2. Check out a patch of Milkweed and see if you can spot a Monarch caterpillar (yellow, black and white striped) or chrysalis (light green with golden dots and then turns transparent).

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VOCABULARY

Umbel - an umbel is a group of flowers that consists of several short flower stalks which spread from a common point, somewhat like an umbrella.

Drought - a prolonged period of abnormally low rainfall, leading to a shortage of water.

Chrysalis - a moth or butterfly at the stage of growth when it is turning into an adult and is enclosed in a hard case.



Thank you to Idaho Fish and Game, The Monarch Joint Venture,
and to The National Wildlife Federation.