

Contra Costa County Milkweed Planting Guide

Why Is Milkweed Important?

Monarch butterflies in the West have declined by 99% over the past 20 years. Milkweed is the butterfly's host plant—the only species they lay their eggs on. Monarch caterpillars eat the leaves, which make them unpalatable to predators. You can help monarchs by planting native milkweed plants in your yard!



Monarch caterpillar on milkweed
Photo: Marie-Ève Garon-Labrecque

Milkweed Species in Contra Costa County

California Milkweed (*Asclepias californica*)

Bloom Time: April to July (early blooming)

Habitat: Rocky outcrops and grassy openings in oak woodlands

How to ID: Thick, woolly stems; magenta-pink flowers; up to 100 cm tall; lays prostrate (flat) when in seed



California milkweed
Photo: Keir Morse

Narrow Leaf Milkweed (*Asclepias fascicularis*)

Bloom Time: May to October (late blooming)

Habitat: Variable; occurs in dry grasslands, drainages, and seeps

How to ID: Long, narrow, pointed leaves; white-pink flowers; 50 to 100 cm tall



Narrow leaf milkweed
Photo: Barry Rice

Showy Milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*)

Bloom Time: June to July (late blooming)

Habitat: Grassy openings in chaparral

How to ID: Velvety or hairy stem; large pale pink flowers; 45 to 200 cm tall



Monarch on showy milkweed
Photo: Thomas Reyes

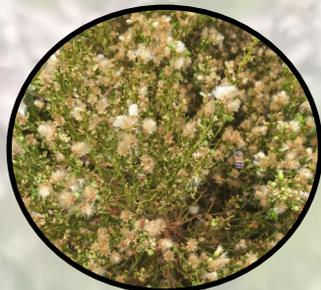
For information on how locate milkweed seed, visit The Xerces Society's Milkweed Seed Finder at: <https://www.xerces.org/milkweed/milkweed-seed-finder>.



Tropical milkweed
Photo: Lisa Damerel



Yarrow
Photo: Lisa Damerel



Coyote brush
Photo: Lisa Damerel



Gumweed
Photo: Vernon Smith



Fruit of showy milkweed
Photo: Lisa Damerel

Avoid Tropical Milkweed

Tropical milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*) is not native to California, and unlike native milkweed species, it does not die back in winter. This means that diseases harmful to monarch butterflies, such as the parasite OE, can persist on its evergreen leaves and infect future monarch generations. Tropical milkweed can also confuse monarch butterflies into breeding when they should be overwintering.

Nectar Plants for Monarchs

Monarch butterflies need nectar to fuel their migration. Add these flowering plants to your yard to support monarchs:

- *Achillea millefolium*—yarrow
- *Helianthus* spp.—sunflowers
- *Agastache urticifolia*—horse mint
- *Heteromeles arbutifolia*—toyon
- *Arctostaphylos* spp.—manzanitas
- *Monardella* spp.—coyote mints
- *Baccharis pilularis*—coyote brush
- *Salix* spp.—willows
- *Baccharis salicifolia*—mule fat
- *Salvia* spp.—sages
- *Ceanothus* spp.—CA lilacs
- *Solidago* spp.—goldenrods
- *Grindelia* spp.—gumplants
- *Verbena lasiostachys*—vervain

Interested in Learning More about Monarch Conservation?

Helpful Online Resources

xerces.org/monarchs

monarchjointventure.org

monarchmilkweedmapper.org

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