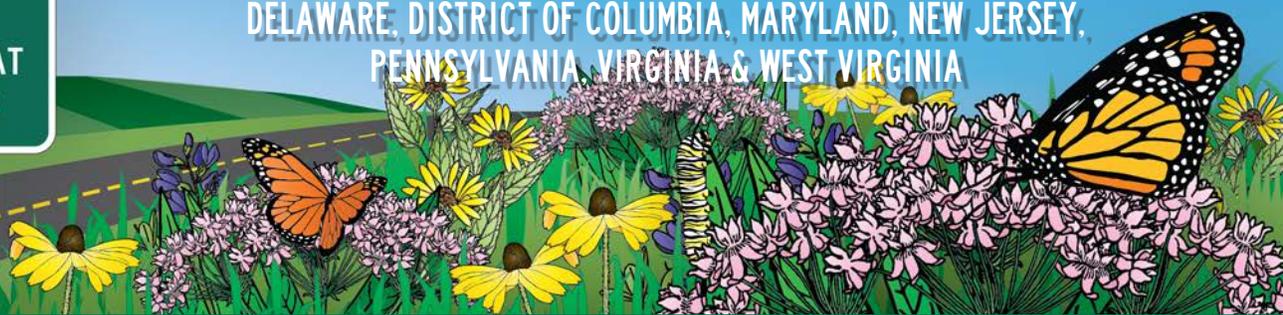




MILKWEEDS OF THE MID-ATLANTIC

DELAWARE, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, MARYLAND, NEW JERSEY,
PENNSYLVANIA, VIRGINIA & WEST VIRGINIA



Milkweeds (*Asclepias* spp.) are herbaceous perennial plants named for their milky sap. These plants occur in a wide range of habitats, including intact natural communities on roadsides and highly disturbed roadsides. As required host plants for monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) caterpillars, milkweeds play an essential role in the butterfly's life cycle (see reverse). Vegetation management that allows milkweeds to persist can support monarchs. This guide can help you recognize the most common native species found on roadsides in your region.

KEY ↘

The most common milkweeds in roadsides in the Mid-Atlantic Region (in alphabetical order):

Clasping milkweed (*A. amplexicaulis*)



PLANT: Upright, unbranched stems; smooth. **LEAVES:** Opposite; oval-shaped; wavy margins; base of leaves clasp stem. **HABITAT:** Grasslands, open woodlands and edges. **SOILS:** Sandy, rocky; dry. **BLOOM:** Jun-Jul; light to dark pink with cream or light green

Swamp milkweed (*A. incarnata*)



PLANT: One to many upright branched stems; smooth or with short hairs. **LEAVES:** Opposite; lance-shaped or narrow; with few short hairs. **HABITAT:** Moist grasslands and ditches, edges of ponds, swamps, lakes, streams. **SOILS:** Silty to loamy or clayey; moist-wet, tolerates some mesic. **BLOOM:** Jul-Aug; light to dark pink or rose purple.

Common milkweed (*A. syriaca*)



PLANT: One to many stout, upright, unbranched stems; usually with short dense hairs. **LEAVES:** Opposite; oval-shaped; hairy underneath. **HABITAT:** Grasslands, old fields, open woods, flood plains, disturbed areas. **SOILS:** Sandy to loamy, clayey or rocky; dry-wet. **BLOOM:** Jun-Aug, light purple or pink.

Butterfly milkweed (*A. tuberosa*)



PLANT: One to many spreading to upright stems; with short hairs; lacks milky sap. **LEAVES:** Alternate; lance-shaped; hairy underneath. **HABITAT:** Grasslands, old fields, open woods, pine barrens, disturbed areas. **SOILS:** Sandy, loamy, rocky; dry-mesic. **BLOOM:** Jun-Aug, orange to red or yellow.

Most common milkweed species *continued*

Whorled milkweed (*A. verticillata*)

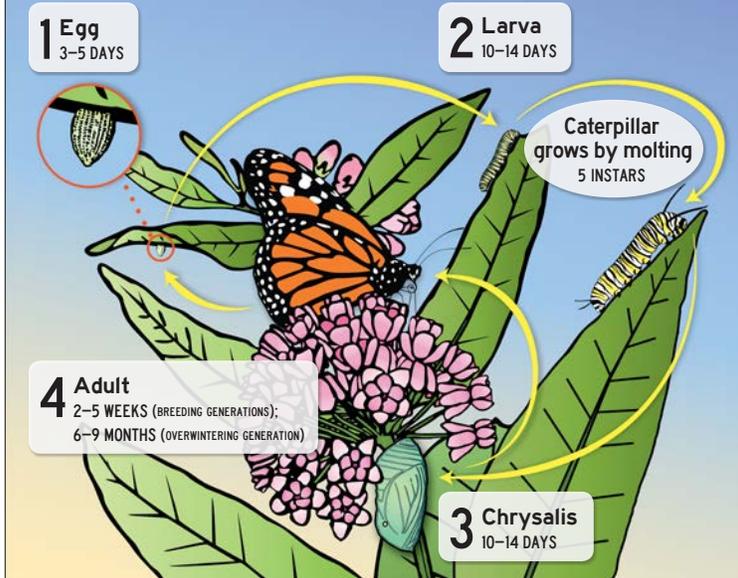


PLANT: One to several upright, unbranched stems; with short hairs. **LEAVES:** Whorled; narrow to needle-like; smooth or with short hairs. **HABITAT:** Grasslands, open woods, fields, flood plains, disturbed areas. **SOILS:** Sandy, rocky, clayey; dry-mesic. **BLOOM:** Jul-Sep; white to green.

Additional Resources:

- ⇒ For more information on monarchs and roadsides, including monitoring, visit: tinyurl.com/MJV-Monarchs-Roadsides
- ⇒ Mowing and Monarchs: tinyurl.com/MJV-MowingForMonarchs
- ⇒ Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation: xerces.org
- ⇒ Monarch Joint Venture: monarchjointventure.org

THE MONARCH BUTTERFLY LIFE CYCLE

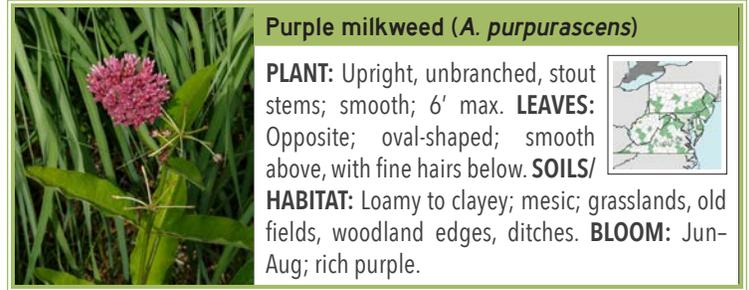


Multiple generations of monarchs are produced over the spring and summer, with the fall generation migrating to overwintering sites. You can monitor monarchs or milkweeds; see Additional Resources above.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: Written by Jennifer Hopwood, Stephanie Frischie, Nancy Adamson, and Kelly Gill (Xerces Society), and Alison Cariveau (Monarch Joint Venture). Reviewed by Steve Young. Design, header, and monarch life cycle by Sara Morris (Xerces Society). This work was conducted in the National Cooperative Highway Research Program, which is administered by the Transportation Research Board of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

Less common roadside milkweeds:

Purple milkweed (*A. purpurascens*)



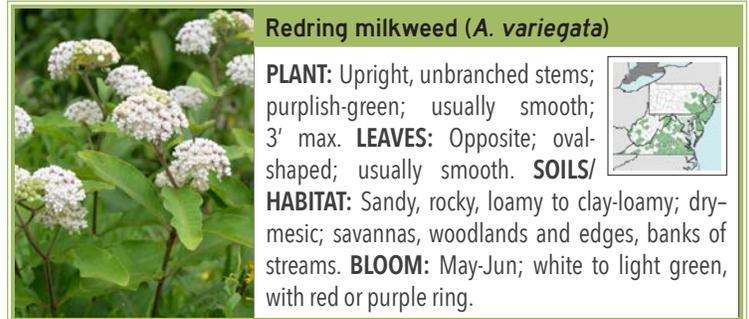
PLANT: Upright, unbranched, stout stems; smooth; 6' max. **LEAVES:** Opposite; oval-shaped; smooth above, with fine hairs below. **SOILS/HABITAT:** Loamy to clayey; mesic; grasslands, old fields, woodland edges, ditches. **BLOOM:** Jun-Aug; rich purple.

Fourleaf milkweed (*A. quadrifolia*)



PLANT: Upright, unbranched stems; with short hairs; 2.5' max. **LEAVES:** Opposite (except a false whorl of four leaves in center of stem); oval-shaped; usually smooth. **SOILS/HABITAT:** Rocky, sandy to loamy; dry; woodlands or woodland edges, glades. **BLOOM:** May-Jul; white to pink.

Redring milkweed (*A. variegata*)



PLANT: Upright, unbranched stems; purplish-green; usually smooth; 3' max. **LEAVES:** Opposite; oval-shaped; usually smooth. **SOILS/HABITAT:** Sandy, rocky, loamy to clay-loamy; dry-mesic; savannas, woodlands and edges, banks of streams. **BLOOM:** May-Jun; white to light green, with red or purple ring.

Green comet milkweed (*A. viridiflora*)



PLANT: Unbranched stems, upright to spreading; with short hairs; 3' max. **LEAVES:** Opposite; lance-shaped; edges wavy or folded upward; with short hairs. **SOILS/HABITAT:** Sandy, loamy, rocky; dry-dry-mesic; grasslands, old fields, dunes, forests, glades. **BLOOM:** Jun-Sep; light to yellowish green.

Additional milkweeds in the Mid-Atlantic: *Asclepias exaltata*, *A. lanceolata*, *A. longifolia*, *A. rubra*, *A. viridis* (WV only).

Maps & Distribution Data:

These profiles are derived from regional floras and field guides and Woodson's *The North American Species of Asclepias* (1954). Most common species are abundant across the states and are found in roadsides. Less common species might not occur in all states, have a limited distribution across a state, or may be less common in roadsides. Additional species may be uncommon in roadsides, have a small distribution in a state or region, or are uncommon or rare. The range maps indicate counties where species have been observed (but may be incomplete), and were created by USDA-NRCS using the latest data from the USDA's PLANTS database (<https://plants.sc.egov.usda.gov>).

PHOTO CREDITS: Jim Fowler (*A. syriaca*); Krista Lundgren, USFWS / flickr (*A. viridiflora*); Jerry Oldenettel / flickr (*A. verticillata*); Tom Potterfield / flickr (*A. incarnata*); Paul Rothrock / SEINet (*A. amplexicaulis* [left]); Scott Seigfried (*A. tuberosa*); Vern Wilkins, Indiana University / Bugwood.org (*A. quadrifolia*); Xerces Society / Nancy Lee Adamson (*A. amplexicaulis* [right]). Photographs remain under the copyright of the photographer. © 2019 by The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation. Xerces® is a trademark registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.