

Common Milkweed

Asclepias syriaca

At a Glance

Height: 3 to 5 feet tall

Bloom Colors: Soft pink to mauve clusters

Bloom Time: Mid to late summer

Days to Maturity: Perennial, blooms in second year

Best For: Monarch butterfly habitat, pollinator gardens

Growing Conditions Quick Reference

Soil Temperature: 65-75F for best germination

Soil Type: Well-drained, sandy or loamy soil

Light Requirements: Full sun

Planting Depth: Surface sow or lightly cover

Seeding Rate: Thin to 18-24 inches apart

Moisture Needs: Moderate; drought tolerant once established

Average Germination Time: 14-28 days (requires cold stratification)

How to Grow

When to Plant: Sow outdoors in fall or cold-stratify seeds for 30-60 days before spring planting.

Location: Full sun with average soil.

Spacing: Thin seedlings to 18-24 inches apart.

Watering: Moderate; low once established.

Fertilizer: Not needed; thrives in poor soil.

Tips for Success

Cold stratification greatly improves germination.

Leave seed pods for natural reseeding.

Supports Monarch butterflies and many pollinators.

Cut back old stems in late winter for fresh growth.

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Fun Fact

Common Milkweed is a vital host plant for Monarch butterfly caterpillars and provides nectar for many beneficial insects.

Companion Planting

Pairs well with coneflowers, black-eyed Susans, and goldenrod for a native pollinator garden.

Harvesting and Use

Leave seed pods for reseeding or collect when they turn brown. Milkweed silk was historically used as insulation in life vests.

Quick Planting Checklist

- Sow in fall or cold-stratify seeds
- Thin seedlings to 18-24 inches apart
- Provide full sun
- Low water needs once established
- Leave seed pods for Monarch habitat