

Napa County

Native Milkweed Guide



Monarch caterpillar on milkweed

Photo: Marie-Ève Garon-Labrecque



Woollypod Milkweed

Photo: Keir Morse



Heart-Leaf Milkweed

Photo: Zane Walker



Narrowleaf Milkweed

Photo: Lenihan Mazur

Why is milkweed important?

Monarch butterflies in the West have declined drastically over the years. Milkweed is the butterfly's host plant- the only species they lay their eggs on. The toxins in milkweed have not been shown to be harmful to livestock or people in small quantities, therefore milkweed can be planted on rangelands, yards, and in small clearings within forested lands to help revive the imperiled monarch population.

Milkweed Species in Napa County

Woollypod Milkweed (*Asclepias eriocarpa*)

Bloom Time: Summer

Habitat: Dry open spaces such as grasslands and openings in woodlands or chaparral

How to ID: 1.3-3 ft. tall. Cluster of white to cream lance-shaped flowers; usually tinted with pink. Lanced to oval shaped leaves, arranged opposite or whorled in clusters of 3-4.

Heart-Leaf Milkweed (*Asclepias cordifolia*)

Bloom: March to July (early blooming)

Habitat: Slopes and grassy openings in mixed evergreen forests and chaparral

How to ID: 1-2 ft. tall. Dark reddish purple flowers, each flower has 5 stamens fused into a column and 5 lighter colored hoods. Opposite leaves are heart-shaped.

Narrowleaf Milkweed (*Asclepias fascicularis*)

Bloom Time: May to October (late blooming)

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

How to ID: 1.7-3.3ft. tall. Long, narrow pointed leaves that are often whorled around the stem; white-pink flowers.



Showy Milkweed
Photo: Jay Chamberlain



Tropical
Milkweed
Photo: Justin Lebar



Yarrow
Photo: Diane Etchison



Coyote Bush
Photo: Talila Golan



Gumweed
Photo: Laura Moon

Showy Milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*)

Bloom Time: June to July (late blooming)

Habitat: Grassy openings in chaparral

How to ID: 4-5ft. tall. Velvety or hairy stem; large, pale pink star shaped flowers. Large banana shaped leaves are opposite on stem.

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, like the parasite OE, can persist on its evergreen leaves infecting future monarch generations. Tropical milkweed can also confuse monarch butterflies into breeding during time periods when they should be overwintering.

Nectar Plants for Monarchs

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

- *Achillea millefolium* - yarrow
- *Arctostaphylos sp.* - manzanita
- *Baccharis pilularis* - coyote brush
- *Grindelia sp.* - gumweed
- *Helianthus sp.* - sunflower
- *Mimulus aurantiacus* - bush monkey flower
- *Lupinus albifrons* - silver lupine
- *Ceanothus ssp.* - Ceanothus
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum* - California buckwheat
- *Frangula californica* - coffeeberry
- *Artemisia californica* - California sagebrush

Interested in planting milkweed?

Napa RCD is available to provide technical assistance on incorporating monarch friendly plants into hedgerows and Carbon Farm Plans.

For more information, contact us:

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