

Starting milkweed from seed

Most milkweed seed will not germinate until it has experienced a cold, damp winter. Reproduce that and germination rises from around 20 percent to 80 or more.

Method: cold-moist stratification

- Dampen a paper towel or a few tablespoons of sand until it feels like a wrung-out cloth.
- Fold the seed into it, seal it in a labeled bag, and note the species and date.
- Refrigerate at about 4 C / 40 F. Do not freeze. Check weekly for mold.
- After the required number of days, sow shallowly: about 6 mm or a quarter inch of cover.
- Keep at 20-24 C / 70-75 F with light. Most species emerge in 7 to 21 days.
- Pot on at the second pair of true leaves. Use deep containers for taprooted species.

Or: sow outdoors in fall

Sow into prepared bare soil from October to December and let winter do the work. Press the seed in rather than burying it. This is cheaper, easier and produces stronger plants than any indoor method.

Stratification by species

Cold-moist period	Species
None needed	Aquatic Milkweed, Balloon Plant, Curtiss' Milkweed, Feay's Milkweed, Giant Milkweed, Pinewoods Milkweed, Savannah Milkweed, Tropical Milkweed
30 days	Antelope Horns, Bract Milkweed, Broadleaf Milkweed, Butterfly Weed, California Milkweed, Carolina Milkweed, Claspig Milkweed, Common Milkweed, Desert Milkweed, Emory's Milkweed, Engelmann's Milkweed, Fewflower Milkweed, Fourleaf Milkweed, Green Antelopehorn, Green Comet Milkweed, Hall's Milkweed, Heartleaf Milkweed, Largeflower Milkweed, Lemmon's Milkweed, Longhood Milkweed, Longleaf Milkweed, Mahogany Milkweed, Michaux's Milkweed, Mojave Milkweed, Narrowleaf Milkweed, Nodding Milkweed, Pineland Milkweed, Pineneedle Milkweed, Plains Milkweed, Poison Milkweed, Poke Milkweed, Prairie Milkweed, Prostrate Milkweed, Purple Milkweed, Red Milkweed, Rusby's Milkweed, Rush Milkweed, Sand Milkweed, Showy Milkweed, Slimleaf Milkweed, Slimpod Milkweed, Southern Milkweed, Sperry's Milkweed, Swamp Milkweed, Tall Green Milkweed, Texas Milkweed, Tufted Milkweed, Velvetleaf Milkweed, White Milkweed, Whitestem Milkweed, Whorled Milkweed, Woolly Milkweed, Woollypod Milkweed, Zizotes Milkweed
60 days	Dwarf Milkweed, Eastwood's Milkweed, Mead's Milkweed, Oval-leaf Milkweed, Pallid Milkweed, Ruth's Milkweed, Serpentine Milkweed, Welsh's Milkweed, Wheel Milkweed, Woolly Milkweed

What to expect in year one

- Weeks 1-3: germination.
- Weeks 4-8: two to four pairs of true leaves. Growth looks alarmingly slow.
- Months 3-6: roots develop, top growth barely moves. Do not feed.
- Year 2: real height, sometimes first flowers. Year 3: full size and full bloom.

Full guide: <https://milkweedusa.com/guides/how-to-plant-milkweed-seeds/>