

Antelope Horns

Asclepias asperula (Decne.) Woodson

Spider Milkweed, Green-flowered Milkweed

A low, sprawling clump of arching stems topped by softball-sized globes of green flowers with maroon centers, blooming very early on limestone and caliche soils. In Texas and New Mexico it is the plant that meets the first northbound monarchs of the year.



Wing-Chi Poon. CC BY-SA 2.5. Wikimedia Commons.

Key facts

Field	Value	Field	Value
Status	Native	Height	1ft-2ft
Flowers	green, cream, maroon	Bloom	March to July
Light	Full sun	Soil	Dry
USDA zones	5-9	Leaves	alternate, narrow
Sap	Milky latex	Roots	Deep taproot, resents transplanting
Stratification	30 days cold-moist	States	9

How to identify it

- Flowers in tight spherical clusters, pale green with dark red-purple hoods. No other milkweed in its range looks like this.
- Stems sprawl outward and curve upward rather than standing straight.
- Leaves are long, narrow and often folded lengthwise along the midrib.
- Curved, upward-pointing pods gave the plant its name.

Ecology

Critically timed rather than merely abundant: it is in full leaf in March and April when monarchs arrive in Texas from Mexico, making it a keystone host for the first generation of the year. Also heavily used by queen butterflies.

Growing

Demands lean, alkaline, sharply drained soil and full sun; it rots quickly in rich beds or irrigated lawns. Direct-sow into gravelly ground, because the taproot resents transplanting. Goes dormant by late summer.

Cautions

One of the more toxic species to livestock, historically responsible for sheep losses on overgrazed range.

Where it grows

Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Nevada, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah

More photographs



Stan Shebs. CC BY-SA 3.0. Wikimedia Commons.



Stan Shebs. CC BY-SA 3.0. Wikimedia Commons.



Stan Shebs. CC BY-SA 3.0. Wikimedia Commons.

References

- Plants of the World Online: <https://powo.science.kew.org/taxon/urn:lsid:ipni.org:names:21143-2>
- GBIF: <https://www.gbif.org/species/8683730>
- iNaturalist: <https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/62298>
- BONAP county map: <https://bonap.net/MapGallery/County/Asclepias%20asperula.png>

<https://milkweedusa.com/species/antelope-horns/>