

Fourleaf Milkweed

Asclepias quadrifolia Jacq.

Whorled Woodland Milkweed

A delicate spring milkweed of dry oak woodland: a slim stem carrying one whorl of four broad leaves at mid-height and a small airy cluster of pale pink flowers. The earliest milkweed to bloom across much of the East.



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Key facts

Field	Value	Field	Value
Status	Native	Height	1ft-2ft
Flowers	pink, white	Bloom	May to June
Light	Part shade, Shade	Soil	Dry, Average
USDA zones	4-8	Leaves	whorled, ovate
Sap	Milky latex	Roots	Deep taproot, resents transplanting
Stratification	30 days cold-moist	States	27

How to identify it

- A single whorl of four leaves partway up the stem, with opposite pairs above and below it.
- Small, pale pink to nearly white flowers in a loose cluster.
- Under two feet tall, growing in dry woodland shade.
- Flowers in May, weeks before other eastern milkweeds.

Ecology

One of very few milkweeds available to the earliest arriving monarchs in the Appalachians and Ozarks, and useful to spring woodland bees.

Growing

Charming in a woodland garden with dry, well-drained, leafy soil. Goes dormant early. Never dig from the wild; buy nursery-propagated stock.

Cautions

Standard milkweed cautions.

Where it grows

Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Delaware, Georgia, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Mississippi, North Carolina, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Vermont, West Virginia

More photographs



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References

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- GBIF: <https://www.gbif.org/species/3170257>
- iNaturalist: <https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/129548>
- BONAP county map: <https://bonap.net/MapGallery/County/Asclepias%20quadrifolia.png>

<https://milkweedusa.com/species/fourleaf-milkweed/>