

Giant Milkweed

Calotropis procera (Aiton) W.T. Aiton

Rooster Tree, Sodom Apple, Calotrope

A large shrub or small tree from Africa and Asia, naturalised in the warmest parts of the United States. Its huge blue-gray leaves and waxy purple-tipped white flowers make it a striking plant, and monarchs and queens use it as a host, but it is invasive on disturbed dry ground.



Habibtadese. CC BY-SA 4.0. Wikimedia Commons.

Key facts

Field	Value	Field	Value
Status	Introduced	Height	6ft-12ft
Flowers	white, purple	Bloom	nearly year-round in frost-free areas
Light	Full sun	Soil	Dry
USDA zones	9-11	Leaves	opposite, ovate
Sap	Milky latex	Roots	Deep taproot, resents transplanting
Stratification	None needed	States	5

How to identify it

- Shrub or small tree to twelve feet, far larger than any native milkweed.
- Very large, thick, blue-gray leaves clasping stout woody stems.
- Waxy white flowers with five purple-tipped lobes, in dense clusters.
- Sap is copious, thick and strongly irritant.

Ecology

Used by monarch and queen larvae in Florida, Hawaii and south Texas. It colonizes overgrazed and disturbed dry ground aggressively and is treated as invasive in parts of its introduced range.

Growing

Not recommended for planting in the United States. Where it is already present, monarchs will use it, but it displaces native vegetation and its sap is a serious hazard.

Cautions

Non-native and invasive on dry disturbed ground. The latex is a severe skin and eye irritant, considerably more so than native milkweeds, and the whole plant is toxic. Wear eye protection if cutting it.

Where it grows

Arizona, California, Florida, Hawaii, Texas

More photographs



Knowledge and philosophy. CC BY-SA 4.0. Wikime



Kingshuk Mondal. CC BY 4.0. Wikimedia Commons.



hadanie7. CC BY 4.0. iNaturalist.

References

- Plants of the World Online: <https://powo.science.kew.org/taxon/urn:lsid:ipni.org:names:1004515-2>
- GBIF: <https://www.gbif.org/species/5414566>
- iNaturalist: <https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/120917>

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