

Heartleaf Milkweed

Asclepias cordifolia (Benth.) Jeps.

Purple Milkweed

Arguably the handsomest milkweed in the West: smooth, waxy, blue-gray heart-shaped leaves clasping arching purple stems, hung with clusters of dark wine-red flowers. A Sierra Nevada and Cascade foothill specialty.



First Light (talk). CC BY-SA 3.0. Wikimedia Commons.

Key facts

Field	Value	Field	Value
Status	Native	Height	1ft-3ft
Flowers	maroon, purple	Bloom	May to July
Light	Full sun, Part shade	Soil	Dry
USDA zones	6-9	Leaves	opposite, cordate
Sap	Milky latex	Roots	Rhizomatous, spreads by root
Stratification	30 days cold-moist	States	3

How to identify it

- Leaves distinctly heart-shaped, clasping the stem, smooth and blue-glaucous.
- Stems often flushed purple and arching.
- Flowers deep red-purple with paler hoods, in loose nodding clusters.
- Rocky slopes and open conifer forest, 1,000 to 6,500 feet.

Ecology

A key early host for western monarchs moving into the Sierra foothills, and one of the earliest western milkweeds to leaf out.

Growing

Outstanding foliage plant for a dry mountain garden. Needs excellent drainage, some afternoon shade at low elevation, and no summer water.

Cautions

Standard milkweed cautions.

Where it grows

California, Nevada, Oregon

More photographs



peganum from Henfield, England. CC BY-SA 2.0.



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References

- Plants of the World Online: <https://powo.science.kew.org/taxon/urn:lsid:ipni.org:names:21169-2>
- GBIF: <https://www.gbif.org/species/3170280>
- iNaturalist: <https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/62248>
- BONAP county map: <https://bonap.net/MapGallery/County/Asclepias%20cordifolia.png>

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