

Plains Milkweed

Asclepias pumila (A. Gray) Vail

Low Milkweed, Dwarf Milkweed

A knee-high-at-most tuft of fine, almost dill-like foliage carrying tiny cream flowers, scattered across shortgrass prairie from Montana to the Texas Panhandle. Easily mistaken for a grass until it blooms.



Jim Pisarowicz. Public domain. Wikimedia Commons.

Key facts

Field	Value	Field	Value
Status	Native	Height	4in-1ft
Flowers	white, cream	Bloom	June to September
Light	Full sun	Soil	Dry
USDA zones	3-8	Leaves	alternate, threadlike
Sap	Milky latex	Roots	Rhizomatous, spreads by root
Stratification	30 days cold-moist	States	10

How to identify it

- Rarely over a foot tall, with crowded thread-fine alternate leaves.
- Small white to cream flower clusters at the stem tips.
- Grows in dense shortgrass and on hard-packed prairie soils where taller milkweeds cannot compete.

Ecology

A genuine shortgrass-prairie specialist. Monarchs use it in the western Great Plains where larger species are absent, and it is important to small native bees on otherwise flowerless rangeland.

Growing

Very drought- and cold-hardy; suited to gravel gardens, green roofs and rock gardens. Spreads slowly by rhizome into a low patch.

Cautions

Narrow-leaved and moderately toxic; a minor component of rangeland poisoning risk.

Where it grows

Colorado, Kansas, Montana, North Dakota, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Wyoming

More photographs



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References

- Plants of the World Online: <https://powo.science.kew.org/taxon/urn:lsid:ipni.org:names:21273-2>
- GBIF: <https://www.gbif.org/species/3170288>
- iNaturalist: <https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/158756>
- BONAP county map: <https://bonap.net/MapGallery/County/Asclepias%20pumila.png>

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