

# Rush Milkweed

*Asclepias subulata* Decne.

Desert Milkweed, Ajamete

A leafless-looking fountain of blue-green pencil-thick stems topped with cream flowers, growing in the hottest, driest washes of the Sonoran and Mojave deserts. It looks like a sculpture and needs no water at all.



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

## Key facts

| Field          | Value              | Field  | Value                                 |
|----------------|--------------------|--------|---------------------------------------|
| Status         | Native             | Height | 2ft-6ft                               |
| Flowers        | cream, white       | Bloom  | nearly year-round in frost-free areas |
| Light          | Full sun           | Soil   | Dry                                   |
| USDA zones     | 8-11               | Leaves | opposite, threadlike                  |
| Sap            | Milky latex        | Roots  | Deep taproot, resents transplanting   |
| Stratification | 30 days cold-moist | States | 4                                     |

## How to identify it

- Effectively leafless, because the narrow leaves drop early and leave bundles of erect stems.
- Stems pale blue-green, rush-like, growing in a dense vase-shaped clump.
- Cream to white flowers in small clusters near the stem tips, almost year-round.

## Ecology

A critical desert host and nectar source that remains available when everything else has dried up, supporting monarchs, queens and desert pollinators through the long dry season.

## Growing

A superb xeriscape plant for Phoenix, Tucson, Palm Springs and Las Vegas gardens. Full sun, no supplemental water once established, no frost below about 20°F.

## Cautions

Standard milkweed cautions.

## Where it grows

Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah

## More photographs



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



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



Sue Carnahan. CC BY 4.0. iNaturalist.

## References

- Plants of the World Online: <https://powo.science.kew.org/taxon/urn:lsid:ipni.org:names:94672-1>
- GBIF: <https://www.gbif.org/species/3170301>
- iNaturalist: <https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/62291>
- BONAP county map: <https://bonap.net/MapGallery/County/Asclepias%20subulata.png>

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