

NATIVE, RARE OR PROTECTED MONARCH VALUE ●●●●●

San Juan Milkweed

Asclepias sanjuanensis K.D. Heil, J.M. Porter & S.L. Welsh

A tiny sprawling milkweed of the Four Corners sandstone country, described only in 1989, with red-violet flowers held upright on stems rarely longer than a finger. It flowers in April and May and holds one of the smallest ranges in the genus.

IN FLOWER

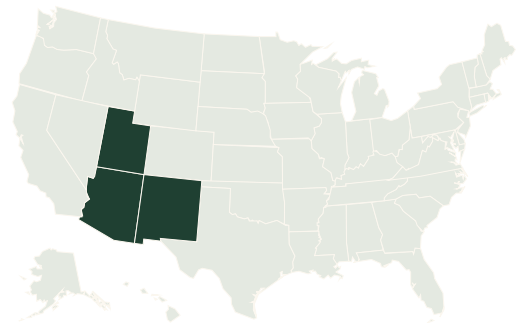


April to May, peaking in April and May



Patrick Alexander from Las Cruces, NM. CC0. Wikimedia Commons.

RECORDED RANGE



3 states. Generalized to state level.

KEY FACTS

HEIGHT	2in-5in	SPREAD	6in-1.3ft
FLOWERS	purple, white	BLOOM	April to May
LIGHT	Full sun	SOIL	Dry
USDA ZONES	5 to 8	LEAVES	opposite, lanceolate
SAP	Milky latex	ROOTS	Rhizomatous, spreads by root
SEED	30 days cold-moist	RATINGS	Garden 1/5, nectar 2/5, monarch 2/5

HOW TO IDENTIFY IT

- Very small and decumbent, 4 to 13 cm, with one to eight stems from a running rootstock and dense curved hairs throughout.
- Leaves lanceolate to ovate, 2 to 5 cm, short-stalked, some opposite and some alternate on the same plant, with entire rather than crinkled margins.
- Few-flowered stalkless clusters, only 3 to 8 flowers, held erect.
- Corolla red-violet; hoods red-violet on the back and white to orange at the base, each with a small tooth on either side of the tip.
- Pinyon-juniper woodland and desert scrub on sandstone between 1,400 and 1,800 m.

ECOLOGY AND WILDLIFE VALUE

One of a group of four closely related Colorado Plateau dwarf milkweeds, alongside dwarf, large-seed, Eastwood's and Ruth's milkweed, that some botanists have treated as a single variable species. Flowering in April and May puts it among the earliest milkweeds anywhere in the West.

GROWING IT

Not in cultivation and not commercially available.

CAUTIONS

A narrow endemic, restricted to San Juan County in New Mexico, San Juan County in Utah, and Apache and Navajo counties in Arizona. Much of its range is on Navajo land. Photograph and report rather than collect.

WHERE IT GROWS

Arizona, New Mexico, Utah

MORE PHOTOGRAPHS



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Martin Purdy. CC BY 4.0. iNaturalist.

REFERENCES

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- GBIF. <https://www.gbif.org/species/3574140>
- iNaturalist. <https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/622906>
- BONAP county-level map. <https://bonap.net/MapGallery/County/Asclepias%20sanjuanensis.png>

THE FULL ACCOUNT, WITH MORE PHOTOGRAPHS

<https://milkweedusa.com/species/san-juan-milkweed/>