

Swamp Milkweed

Asclepias incarnata L.

Rose Milkweed, Marsh Milkweed, Pink Milkweed

The best-behaved milkweed there is: a tidy, clump-forming, non-running perennial with narrow willow-like leaves and domed clusters of vivid rose-pink flowers that smell faintly of cinnamon. It grows in wet ground in the wild but is perfectly happy in ordinary garden soil, which makes it the safest choice for a border.



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Key facts

Field	Value	Field	Value
Status	Native	Height	3ft-5ft
Flowers	pink, rose, white	Bloom	June to September
Light	Full sun, Part shade	Soil	Wet, Average
USDA zones	3-9	Leaves	opposite, lanceolate
Sap	Milky latex	Roots	Fibrous, clump-forming and easy to move
Stratification	30 days cold-moist	States	43

How to identify it

- Narrow, smooth, willow-like leaves on a slender stem that branches near the top.
- Flowers are a much brighter, cleaner pink than common milkweed, in neat rounded clusters held upright.
- Pods are slim, smooth and spindle-shaped, never warty.
- Forms a discrete crown; it does not send up shoots away from the plant.

Ecology

Excellent monarch host and outstanding late-season nectar plant, blooming when common milkweed has finished. Great spangled fritillaries, tiger swallowtails and long-tongued bees dominate the flowers. Because it holds foliage late and stays soft, it often carries the last monarch generation of the year in the Midwest and Northeast.

Growing

The one to plant if you only plant one. It stays where you put it, tolerates clay, standing water and rain gardens, and takes ordinary garden watering without complaint. Slow to emerge in spring. Cut back in late winter. Divides easily, unlike its taprooted relatives. The white form 'Ice Ballet' and compact 'Cinderella' are widely sold.

Cautions

Low toxicity risk in gardens. Aphid magnet. Expect orange oleander aphids, and leave them for the ladybirds rather than spraying, which kills monarch eggs.

Where it grows

Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Maryland, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Mississippi, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Vermont, Wisconsin, West Virginia, Wyoming

More photographs



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References

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- GBIF: <https://www.gbif.org/species/3170266>
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- BONAP county map: <https://bonap.net/MapGallery/County/Asclepias%20incarnata.png>

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