

Asclepias tuberosa

Butterfly Weed

Tried and True
Native Plant Selections
for the Mid-Atlantic
mgnv.org

Butterfly Weed is one of the showiest native* wildflowers. Summer waves of orange blossoms brighten open fields, woods, and waysides. Later, spindle-shaped seed pods pierce the air in shades of green, yellow, brown. When pods split open, the seeds' silky threads glisten in the sun. The Virginia Native Plant Society selected Butterfly Weed as Wildflower of the Year in 1992.



Perennial	Flowers/Foliage with Monarchs, Seed Pods**
Height: 1–3 feet	
Spread: 1–1½ feet	
Bloom Color: Orange	
Characteristics	
Single-stemmed to multistemmed clumps	
Lance-shaped leaves on hairy stems	
Orange flowers in clusters bloom June to August	
Spindle-shaped seed pods, 3–6 inches long	
Self-seeds when pods split open	 
Attributes	
Tolerates dry/poor soil and drought; no serious pests or diseases; deer seldom severely damage	
Seed pods used in dried flower arrangements	
Ethnobotanic uses; toxic when ingested without sufficient preparation or in sufficient quantity	
Attracts a variety of beneficial and other insects and hummers; larval host for Monarch butterfly	
Growing and Maintenance Tips	Excellent Replacement for
Soil Requirements: Average, well-drained	<i>Buddleia</i> species - Butterfly Bush
Light Requirements: Sun, Partial Shade	<i>Coronilla varia</i> - Crown Vetch
Water Requirements: Dry, Moist	<i>Lythrum salicaria</i> - Purple Loosestrife
Seedlings transplant well; deep tap roots do not	<i>Sedum</i> species
Flowers produced once plants are 2–3 years old	
Dead foliage or flowers may harbor Monarch eggs or larvae so do not remove them until after frost	*It is common from central PA through VA. **A tattered-winged Monarch butterfly pictured in July was near the end of its life cycle. If successful, the Monarch larva pictured eating leaves in September would have become a butterfly, migrated to Mexico, and returned to the US in early spring to lay its eggs. The large milkweed bug nymphs pictured on the pod eat the seeds, helping to regulate milkweed populations.
Use in borders or in butterfly or meadow gardens	
Hardiness: USDA Zones 3–9	

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Images by Mary Free, Bluemont Park, Sunny Garden and Glencarlynn Garden