

Asclepias incarnata

Swamp Milkweed

Tried and True
Native Plant Selections
for the Mid-Atlantic



This stately milkweed is at home in moist habitats across much of the United States.* It has flat terminal clusters of showy pale pink to mauve flowers in summer, succeeded by interesting fruit (follicles) that split to release seeds on silken parachutes.

Perennial	En Masse, with Pollinator,** Fruit,*** Seeds	
Height: 4–6 feet		
Spread: 2–3 feet		
Bloom Color: Pink to mauve and whitish		
Characteristics		
Loose-clumping, multi-stemmed perennial		
Lance-shaped, light green leaves emerge slowly in spring and in full sun may turn purplish by fall		
Flat clusters of fragrant pink and whitish flowers		
Green tear-shaped follicles turn to brown in fall		
Spreads by seed and underground rhizomes		
Attributes		
Tolerates clay soil, wet soils, temporary flooding, some drought/drier soils (once set); no serious pests or diseases; deer seldom severely damage		
Ethnobotanic uses; toxic when ingested without sufficient preparation or in sufficient quantity; may cause contact dermatitis		
Attracts numerous beneficial insects as well as hummingbirds; good for attracting native bees; larval host for the Monarch butterfly		
Growing and Maintenance Tips	Excellent Replacement for	
Soil Requirements: Rich, evenly moist	<i>Canna</i> cultivars	
Light Requirements: Sun, Partial Shade	<i>Cleome hasslerana</i> - Spider Flower (annual)	
Water Requirements: Moist, Wet	<i>Lythrum salicaria</i> & <i>L. virgatum</i> - Loosestrifes	
To control spread: remove follicles before they split open and unwanted shoots as they appear	<p>*Two subspecies are recognized. Together they are widespread across the Mid-Atlantic Region: 1. <i>A. incarnata</i> L. ssp. <i>incarnata</i> is more prevalent in the northern Mid-Atlantic Region and frequent in the VA mountains. 2. <i>A. incarnata</i> L. ssp. <i>pulchra</i> is native only in the southeastern corner of PA. It is native to DC, common throughout DE and frequent in VA's Piedmont and Coastal Plain. Both subspecies occur in NoVA, but variation <i>incarnata</i> is not native to Arlington and Prince William counties.</p> <p>**A brown-belted bumble bee sips nectar from the flowers.</p> <p>***The pictured milkweed bug nymphs pierce the follicles to feed on the seeds, helping to regulate milkweed populations.</p>	
Dead foliage or flowers may harbor Monarch eggs or larvae so do not remove them until after frost		
Use in bogs or in butterfly or rain/water gardens		
Hardiness: USDA Zones 3–6		

developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria

Images by Mary Free, Central Library Garden and private garden, Arlington



Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia State University, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. Edwin J. Jones, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg; M. Ray McKinnie, Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State, Petersburg.

