

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	
Opposite , lanceolate , sessile or clasping , light green leaves emerge slowly in spring	
Fragrant flower clusters (umbels) July–September	
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 in sufficient quantity; may cause contact dermatitis & eye irritation; also toxic to cats, dogs, horses	<div>Excellent Replacement for</div> <div><i>Canna</i> cultivars</div> <div><i>Cleome hasslerana</i> - Spider Flower (annual)</div> <div>Lythrum salicaria & <i>L. virgatum</i> - Loosestrifes</div> <div>*Two subspecies are recognized. Together they are widespread across the Mid-Atlantic Region: 1. <i>A. incarnata</i> var. <i>incarnata</i> is more prevalent in the northern Mid-Atlantic Region and frequent in the VA mountains. 2. <i>A. incarnata</i> var. <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.</div> <div>**A brown-belted bumble bee sips nectar from the flowers.</div> <div>***The pictured milkweed bug nymphs pierce the follicles to feed on the seeds, helping to regulate milkweed populations.</div>
Attracts numerous beneficial insects as well as hummingbirds; good for attracting native bees; larval host for the Monarch butterfly	
Growing and Maintenance Tips	
Soil Requirements : Rich, evenly moist	
Light Requirements : Sun, Partial Shade	
Water Requirements : Moist, Wet	
To control spread: remove follicles before they split open and unwanted shoots as they appear	
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