

MILKWEEDS FOR THE GARDEN

by Rita Pelczar, contributing editor for *The American Gardener*.

While common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) is a favorite of monarch larvae, several other milkweeds native to North America can satisfy very hungry caterpillars while also offering greater ornamental appeal in a garden setting. Here are some good choices.

| Common Name (Botanical Name) | Height/Spread (inches) | Comments | Native Range | USDA Hardiness/ AHS Heat Zones |
|---|---------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Butterfly flower (<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>) | 18–24/36 | tuberous perennial with orange flowers in mid- to late summer; full sun, drought resistant | eastern Canada, widespread U.S. | 3–9/9–2 |
| <i>A. tuberosa</i> 'Gay Butterflies' | 24/24 | same as above with red, yellow, and orange flowers | | 3–9/9–2 |
| <i>A. tuberosa</i> 'Hello Yellow' | 30/30 | same as above with yellow flowers | | 3–9/9–2 |
| Swamp milkweed (<i>A. incarnata</i>) | 36–48/24 | perennial with bright pink flowers from midsummer to fall; full sun and moist soil | eastern Canada, widespread U.S. | 3–9/9–2 |
| <i>A. incarnata</i> 'Ice Ballet' | 36–48/12–18 | same as above with white flowers | | 3–9/9–2 |
| Horsetail milkweed (<i>A. verticillata</i>) | 12–36/12–24 | perennial with fine textured foliage and white flowers in midsummer; adaptable; deer resistant; toxic to livestock and horses | eastern and central U.S. and Canada | 4–8/9–1 |
| Lance-leaf milkweed <i>A. lanceolata</i> | 36–48/12 | tuberous perennial with bright red flowers from early to late summer; full sun or part shade, moist soil | mid-Atlantic, Southeast U.S. | 3–9/9–1 |
| Showy milkweed (<i>A. speciosa</i>) | 30–48/24 | erect perennial with grayish woolly leaves and purple-pink flowers in summer; full sun and well-drained to dry soil; can be aggressive | central and western U.S. and Canada | 3–9/9–1 |



Left: Butterfly flower (*Asclepias tuberosa*), courtesy of Chris Evans, www.bugwood.org. Above: 'Ice Ballet' swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*), courtesy of Bailey Nurseries.