Field Guide to Georgia Milkweeds

Milkweed photographs on in this guide are courtesy of renowned nature photographers Carol and Hugh Nourse unless otherwise noted.

Descriptions of the milkweed were compiled by Henning VonSchmeling, horticulturist at Chattahoochee Nature Center, Roswell, GA.

Georgia Plant Conservation Alliance recommendations are included.

Asclepias amplexicaulis (Smith) Clasping Milkweed

**Plant description:** 1-3 upright stems that are 40-100 cm tall. Leaves are opposite on the stem, 8-15 cm long and 4-8 cm wide. Plant has 4 to 6 pairs of leaves. Cluster of flowers on the top with rose-purple flowers. The umbel of flowers is 7 to 9 cm wide. Seed pods are upright.

**Bloom period:** May - July

**Seeds:** June – August

**Habitat:** Open woods, roadsides, fields and clearings

**Range:** Throughout Georgia, Common

Asclepias cinerea (Walter) Carolina Milkweed

**Plant description:** Single stalk that is 30-70 cm tall. The leaves are opposite on the stem, 5 to 9 cm long and just a few millimeters wide. 1 to 4 flower clusters in the top part of the stem. The flower color is lavender. The umbels are small, only 2-3.5 cm wide. Seed pods are 10-12 cm long and only 5 to 10mm wide.

**Bloom period:** June and July

**Seeds:** August and September

**Habitat:** Savannahs, moist grasslands

**Range:** Coastal Plain of Georgia, Common

Clasping Milkweed

Photo by J & J Balaban
USF Herbarium Slide Collection

Carolina Milkweed

Photo by J & J Balaban
USF Herbarium Slide Collection
**Asclepias connivens** (Baldwin) Largeflower Milkweed

**Plant Description:** Upright stalks that are up to 95 cm tall. The leaves are opposite and sessile. The leaves are 10-12 cm long and 3-5 cm wide. Flower clusters on the top and the top five leaf axils. The flower color is greenish-yellow. The umbels of flowers are 10 to 15 cm wide, each individual flower can measure up to 3 cm. Seed pods are 10-15 cm long and 3-4 cm wide.

**Bloom period:** June – August

**Seeds:** August – October

**Habitat:** Low pinelands, savannahs and margins of Cypress Swamps

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**Asclepias curassavica** Mexican Milkweed, Bloodflower

**Plant Description:** Annual, up to 100 cm tall, multiple stems. Leaves opposite, 8-10 cm long, 2-4 cm wide. Flowers are produced on the upper portion of stem, blooms continuously all summer. Umbels are small, 3-5 cm wide, flowers are orange and red. Seed pods are 5-8 cm long and 1.5 cm wide.

**Bloom Period:** May through frost

**Seeds:** June through frost

**Habitat:** not native to Georgia, Central and South American species

**Range:** This species has been linked to monarchs overwintering and breeding along the Gulf and Atlantic Coasts, making them vulnerable to harsh winters, starvation and the proliferation of a protozoan parasite infection. **DO NOT PLANT IN GEORGIA.**

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**Asclepias exaltata** (Linnaeus) Poke Milkweed

**Plant Description:** The single stalk is 50 to 100 cm tall. Leaves are opposite, 14 to 21 cm long and 3-11 cm wide. Flower umbels 2-4, in the upper leaf axils. Flower color is greenish-white and can be tinged with pink. The umbels are 5 to 10 cm across. Seed pod is 12-14 cm long and 1.5 to 2 cm wide.

**Bloom Period:** June and July

**Seeds:** August and September

**Habitat:** Hardwood forests and forest margins

**Range:** Northeast Georgia, higher altitude species, Common
**Asclepias hirtella** (Pennell) Woodson Green Milkweed

**Plant Description:** Several stalks that are 60-70 cm tall. Leaves are opposite and very narrow and long. Leaf length is 8-15 cm and width is 10-15 mm. Flower cluster in the top of the plant only. Each cluster contains up to 50 individual flowers. Seed pods are long and skinny. Sap of this milkweed is not milky.

**Bloom Period:** May through July

**Seeds:** July through September

**Habitat:** Thin Woods and open places

**Range:** In Georgia only known from Catoosa and Floyd County, Rare

*If you find this rare milkweed, let Georgia DNR know by calling 706-557-3022. The Georgia Plant Conservation Alliance asks that you not buy, collect or plant this milkweed.*

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**Asclepias humistrata** (Walter) Pinewoods or Sandhill Milkweed

**Plant Description:** Many stalks that are spreading away from crown as the grow up, 20-70 cm long. Leaves are opposite; usually the plant has 5-8 pairs. Leaves are 6-10 cm long and 4-8 cm wide. The veins of the leaves are pink to lavender. Several flower clusters on top of the stem, flower color is rose to lavender. Flower clusters 3-6 cm wide. Seed pods are 10-14 cm long and 1.5-2 cm wide.

**Bloom Period:** May and June

**Seeds:** June and July

**Habitat:** Sand hills and sandy pine-oak woods

**Range:** Throughout Coastal Plain of Georgia, Common

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**Asclepias incarnata** (Linnaeus) Swamp Milkweed

**Plant Description:** Many branching stems that are 50-150 cm tall. Leaves opposite, 6-15 cm long and 2-7 cm wide. Flower color is pink, 4-20 umbels, each umbel being 3-5 cm broad. Seed pods are 6-10 cm long and 1-1.5 cm wide.

**Bloom Period:** July – September

**Seeds:** August – October

**Habitat:** Marshes, stream banks and moist meadows

**Range:** Primarily a mountain species, occasionally found in the Piedmont and Coastal Plain of Georgia, Common
**Asclepias lanceolata** (Walter) Fewflower Milkweed

**Plant Description:** Single stem up to 120 cm tall. Leaves opposite, 3-6 pairs. The leaves are 7-20 cm long and only 0.5-1.5 cm wide. 2-4 flower clusters towards the top of the plant, 5-10 wide. Flower color is reddish-orange. Seed pod is 8-10 cm long and 1 cm wide.

**Bloom Period:** June - August

**Seeds:** August and September

**Habitat:** Savannahs, swamps and marshes

**Range:** Coastal Plain, Common

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**Asclepias longifolia** (Michaux) Longleaf Milkweed

**Plant Description:** Single stem that is 20-70 cm tall. Many opposite, linear leaves that are 8-14 cm long and only 2-7 mm wide. Flower color is greenish white. The flower clusters are on the top of the plant and are 3-5 cm wide. Seed pod is 9-13 cm long and only 5-10 mm wide.

**Bloom Period:** May and June

**Seeds:** June

**Habitat:** Savannahs, low pinelands and bogs

**Range:** Coastal Plain, Uncommon

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**Asclepias michauxii** (Decaisne) Michaux’s Milkweed

**Plant Description:** Single stalk that is 10-40 cm tall. Many leaves that are primarily opposite and linear. The leaves are 5-12 cm long and 3-6 mm wide. Flower color is greenish white. The single umbel is 3-4 cm across. Seed pods are 10-15 cm long and 5-8 mm broad.

**Bloom Period:** May

**Seeds:** June

**Habitat:** Savannahs and pinelands

**Range:** Coastal Plain, Common
**Asclepias obovata** (Elliott) Pineland Milkweed

**Plant Description:** Single stalk that is 40-70 cm tall. Leaves are opposite, 5-9 cm long and 2-3.5 cm wide. Flower color is yellow-green. 1-8 umbels arise from the leaf axils in the upper part of the plant. Umbels are 3-3.5 cm across. Seed pods are 6-8 cm long and 1-2 cm wide.

**Bloom Period:** June – September

**Seeds:** July – October

**Habitat:** Sandy pinelands

**Range:** Coastal Plain, Unusual

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**Asclepias pedicellata** (Walter) Savannah Milkweed

**Plant Description:** Single, un-branched stalk 10-30 cm tall. Linear leaves are opposite, 2.5 - 4.5 cm long and 2-7 mm wide. Flowers are greenish, sometimes cream colored. 1-3 umbels grow from the upper leaf axils; each umbel will only have 3-6 flowers. Seedpod is 12 cm long and only 5 mm wide.

**Bloom Period:** July and August

**Seeds:** September and October

**Habitat:** Savannahs

**Range:** Coastal Plain, Rare

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**Asclepias perennis** (Walter) Aquatic Milkweed

**Plant Description:** Many un-branching stems that are 30-50 cm tall. Opposite leaves that are 6-12 cm long and 1-3 cm wide. Flowers are white. 2-4 umbels grow from the upper leaf axils and are 2-3 cm broad. The seed pods hang down and are 4-6 cm long and 1.5 to 2.5 cm wide.

**Bloom Period:** June-August

**Seeds:** August and September

**Habitat:** Swamp forests

**Range:** Coastal Plain, Unusual
**Asclepias purpurascens** (Linnaeus) Purple Milkweed

**Plant Description:** Multiple stems from 50-110 cm tall. The leaves are opposite on the stem, 10-15 cm long and 6 cm wide. The 1-3 umbels are on the upper portion of the stem. The umbels are large, up to 7 cm wide, purple. Seed pods are downy, 10 cm long and 2 cm wide.

**Bloom Period:** June and July

**Seeds:** August and September

**Habitat:** Swamp forests and alluvial woods

**Range:** Northwest Georgia, Rare

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**Asclepias quadrifolia** (Jacquin) Fourleaf Milkweed

**Plant Description:** Solitary stems are 30-50 cm tall. The leaves appear whorled on the stem, 4-12 cm long and 2-5 cm wide. Flowers are white or pinkish. 2-4 umbels from the upper nodes of the plant, each umbel 3-5 cm broad. Upright seedpods are 8-11 cm long and 4-8 mm wide.

**Bloom Period:** May and June

**Seeds:** August and September

**Habitat:** Mixed deciduous forests

**Range:** Mountains of extreme North Georgia, Common

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**Asclepias rubra** (Linnaeus) Red Milkweed

**Plant Description:** Stems are un-branched and 50-90 cm tall. Leaves are opposite on the stem, 9-12 cm long and 1.5-3 cm wide. Flowers are dull red to lavender. 1-4 umbels on top of the plant which are 3-5 cm across. Upright seedpods are 9-12 cm long and 1-1.5 cm wide.

**Bloom Period:** June and July

**Seeds:** July through September

**Habitat:** Bogs, pocosins and savannahs

**Range:** Coastal Plain, only known from Douglas County in Georgia, possibly extirpated.

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**Asclepias syriaca (Linnaeus) Common Milkweed**

**Plant Description:** Single, un-branched stalk that is 50-200 cm tall. Leaves opposite on stalk, 10-25 cm long and 3-10 cm wide. Flowers white to pink. 2 to 6 umbels from the upper nodes. Each umbel is 5-10 cm broad. Seed pods are 8-12 cm long and 2.5-3.5 cm broad.

**Bloom Period:** June through August

**Seeds:** July through September

**Habitat:** Meadows, fields and roadsides

**Range:** Present but rare in northwest region of state  
Because of its aggressive nature and the threat of hybridization with our rare species, the Georgia Plant Conservation Alliance recommends **not** planting this species in Georgia.

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**Asclepias tuberosa (Linnaeus) Butterfly Milkweed**

**Plant Description:** Multiple stout branching stalks that are 20-80 cm tall. Hairy leaves are alternating on the stem. Leaves are 4-10 cm long and 1-2.5 cm wide. Flowers from red to yellow, mostly orange. 3-15 umbels on the sideways branching stems. The umbels are 2-5 cm broad. Seed pods are 8-15 cm long and 1-2 cm wide.

**Bloom Period:** May through August

**Seeds:** August through October

**Habitat:** Dry fields, roadsides and margins of woods

**Range:** Throughout Georgia, Common

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**Asclepias variegata (Linnaeus) Redring Milkweed**

**Plant Description:** Single, un-branching stalks are 20-100 cm tall. Leaves are opposite on the stems and are 5-14 cm long and 3-7 cm wide. Flowers are white. Umbels 1-4 from the upper nodes of leaves. Each umbel is 3-6 cm broad. Seed pods are 10-14 cm long and 1.5 to 2 cm wide.

**Bloom Period:** May and June

**Seeds:** July through September

**Habitat:** Open woods and woodland margins

**Range:** Throughout Georgia, More Common in the North, Common
**Asclepias viridiflora** (Rafinesque) Green Comet Milkweed

**Plant Description**: Single stems are 20-80 cm tall. Leaves are opposite and extremely variable. They are 3-10 cm long and 1.5-4.5 cm wide. Flowers are green. Umbels 1-6 from the upper nodes. Each umbel is 2.5-3.5 cm wide. Seed pods are 9-13 cm long and 1-2 cm wide.

**Bloom Period**: June through August

**Seeds**: August and September

**Habitat**: Fields, roadsides and waste ground

**Range**: Piedmont, Unusual

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**Asclepias viridis** (Walter) Green Antelopehorn

**Plant Description**: Stems un-branched, up to 95 cm tall. Leaves are opposite, 8-12 cm long and 4-6 cm wide. Flowers are green. Umbels 1-5 from the upper nodes. Umbels 4-6 cm broad. Seed pods are 10-12 cm long and 1-3 cm wide.

**Bloom Period**: June through August

**Seeds**: August through October

**Habitat**: Dry pinelands, cedar glades and prairies

**Range**: Coastal Plain and extreme NW Georgia, Rare

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**Asclepias verticillata** (Linnaeus) Whorled Milkweed

**Plant Description**: Stems are 30-80 cm tall, arising from runners. Sometimes branched for the upper third of the plant. Leaves are whorled on the stem, 3-7 cm long and only 1-2 mm wide. Flowers are greenish-white. 2-8 umbels in the upper part of the plant, each umbel is 2-5 cm wide. Seed pods are 4-8 cm long and 4-6 mm wide.

**Bloom Period**: June through September

**Seeds**: September and October

**Habitat**: Dry open woods, Sandhills, rocky slopes and roadsides

**Range**: Mountains and Piedmont of Georgia, Common

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**Asclepias viridiflora** (Rafinesque) Green Comet Milkweed

**Plant Description**: Single stems are 20-80 cm tall. Leaves are opposite and extremely variable. They are 3-10 cm long and 1.5-4.5 cm wide. Flowers are green. Umbels 1-6 from the upper nodes. Each umbel is 2.5-3.5 cm across. Seed pods 9-13 cm long and 1-2 cm wide.

**Bloom Period**: June through August

**Seeds**: August and September

**Habitat**: Fields, roadsides and waste ground

**Range**: Piedmont, Unusual

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