

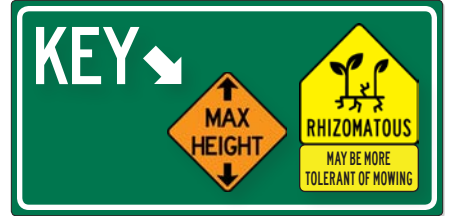


MILKWEEDS OF THE NORTHEAST

CONNECTICUT, MAINE, MASSACHUSETTS, NEW HAMPSHIRE, NEW YORK, RHODE ISLAND & VERMONT



Milkweeds (*Asclepias* spp.) are herbaceous perennial plants named for their milky sap. These plants occur in a wide range of habitats, including intact natural communities on roadsides and highly disturbed roadsides. As required host plants for monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) caterpillars, milkweeds play an essential role in the butterfly's life cycle (see reverse). Vegetation management that allows milkweeds to persist can support monarchs. This guide can help you recognize the most common native species found on roadsides in your region.



The most common milkweeds in roadsides in the Northeast Region (in alphabetical order):

Swamp milkweed (*A. incarnata*)



PLANT: One to many upright, branched stems; smooth or with short hairs. **LEAVES:** Opposite; lance-shaped or narrow; with few short hairs. **HABITAT:** Moist grasslands and ditches, edges of ponds, swamps, lakes, streams. **SOILS:** Silty to loamy or clayey; moist-wet, tolerates some mesic. **BLOOM:** Jul-Aug; pink or light purple.

Common milkweed (*A. syriaca*)



PLANT: One to many stout, upright, unbranched stems; usually with short dense hairs. **LEAVES:** Opposite; oval-shaped; hairy underneath. **HABITAT:** Grasslands, old fields, open woods, flood plains, disturbed areas. **SOILS:** Sandy to loamy, clayey or rocky; dry-wet. **BLOOM:** Jul-Aug; pale purple or pink.

Butterfly milkweed (*A. tuberosa*)



PLANT: One to many spreading to upright stems; with short hairs; lacks milky sap. **LEAVES:** Alternate; lance-shaped; hairy underneath. **HABITAT:** Grasslands, open woods, pine barrens. **SOILS:** Sandy, loamy, rocky; dry-mesic. **BLOOM:** Jun-Jul; orange to red or yellow.

Less common roadside milkweeds:

Clasping milkweed (*A. amplexicaulis*)



PLANT: Upright, unbranched stems; smooth; 3' max. **LEAVES:** Opposite; oval-shaped; wavy margins; base of leaves clasp stem. **SOILS:** Sandy, rocky; dry. **HABITAT:** Grasslands, open woodlands and edges. **BLOOM:** Jun-Jul; light to dark pink with cream or light green.

Less common roadside milkweeds *continued*

Poke milkweed (*A. exaltata*)



PLANT: Upright, unbranched stem; smooth; 6' max. **LEAVES:** Opposite; oval-shaped; smooth. **SOILS:** Sandy, loamy; dry. **HABITAT:** Woodlands or woodland edges, dry rocky summits. **BLOOM:** Jun-Jul; green or pale purple with white or light pink; drooping.

Fourleaf milkweed (*A. quadrifolia*)



PLANT: Upright, unbranched stems; with short hairs; 2.5' max. **LEAVES:** Opposite, except a false whorl of four leaves in center of stem; oval-shaped; usually smooth. **SOILS:** Rocky, sandy to loamy; dry. **HABITAT:** Open woodlands or woodland edges, glades. **BLOOM:** May-Jun; white to pink.

Additional Resources:

- ⇒ For more information on monarchs and roadsides, including monitoring, visit: tinyurl.com/MJV-Monarchs-Roadsides
- ⇒ Mowing and Monarchs: tinyurl.com/MJV-MowingForMonarchs
- ⇒ Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation: xerces.org
- ⇒ Monarch Joint Venture: monarchjointventure.org

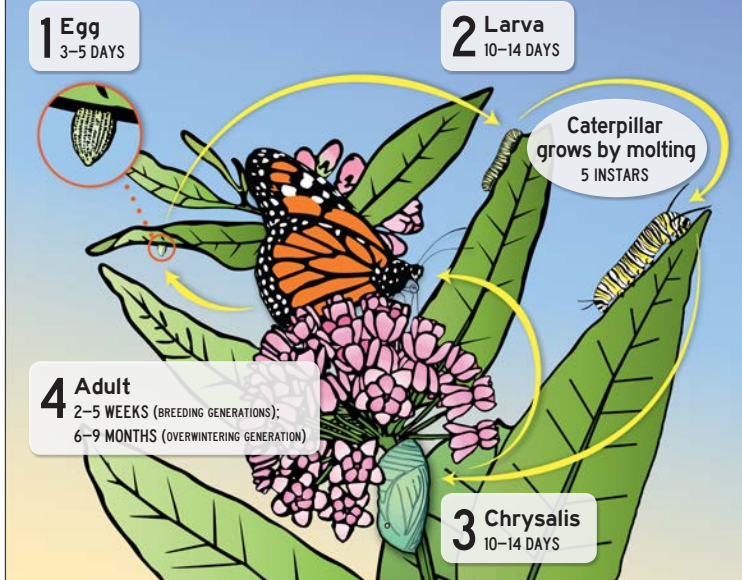
Whorled milkweed (*A. verticillata*)



PLANT: One to several upright, unbranched stems; with short hairs; 3' max. **LEAVES:** Whorled; narrow to needle-like; smooth or short hairs. **SOILS:** Sandy, rocky, clayey; moist. **HABITAT:** Grasslands, open woods, fields, flood plains, disturbed areas. **BLOOM:** Jul-Aug; white to green.

Additional milkweeds in the Northeast: *Asclepias purpurascens*, *A. rubra*, *A. variegata*, *A. viridiflora*.

THE MONARCH BUTTERFLY LIFE CYCLE



Multiple generations of monarchs are produced over the spring and summer, with the fall generation migrating to overwintering sites. You can monitor monarchs or milkweeds; see Additional Resources above.

Maps & Distribution Data:

These profiles are derived from regional floras and field guides and Woodson's *The North American Species of Asclepias* (1954). Most common species are abundant across the states and are found in roadsides. Less common species might not occur in all states, have a limited distribution across a state, or may be less common in roadsides. Additional species may be uncommon in roadsides, have a small distribution in a state or region, or are uncommon or rare. The range maps indicate counties where species have been observed (but may be incomplete), and were created by USDA-NRCS using the latest data from the USDA's PLANTS database (<https://plants.sc.gov.usda.gov>).

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PHOTO CREDITS: Jim Fowler (*A. syriaca*, *A. exaltata*); Jerry Oldenettel / flickr (*A. verticillata*); Tom Potterfield / flickr (*A. incarnata*); Xerces Society / Nancy Lee Adamson (*A. amplexicaulis* [right]); Paul Rothrock / SEINet (*A. amplexicaulis* [left]); Scott Seigfreid (*A. tuberosa*); Vern Wilkins, Indiana University / Bugwood.org (*A. quadrifolia*). Photographs remain under the copyright of the photographer. © 2019 by The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation. Xerces® is a trademark registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.