

Poke Milkweed

Asclepias exaltata L.

Tall Milkweed

The woodland milkweed. Tall and slender with broad thin leaves like pokeweed, carrying loose, drooping clusters of green-and-white flowers that hang like small chandeliers along a shaded forest edge.



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Key facts

Field	Value	Field	Value
Status	Native	Height	3ft-6ft
Flowers	white, green	Bloom	June to July
Light	Part shade, Shade	Soil	Average
USDA zones	3-8	Leaves	opposite, ovate
Sap	Milky latex	Roots	Deep taproot, resents transplanting
Stratification	30 days cold-moist	States	27

How to identify it

- Grows in shade and dappled woodland, which no other milkweed reliably does.
- Flower clusters are loose and pendulous, with widely spaced flowers on long stalks.
- Petals green-tinged white, reflexed sharply back from pure white hoods.
- Leaves broad, thin, pointed at both ends, on distinct stalks.

Ecology

The only significant monarch host in eastern woodland habitats, and it hybridises occasionally with common milkweed where the two meet in clearings.

Growing

Genuinely useful for shady gardens. Give it part shade, humus-rich moist soil and, if possible, no competition from tree roots. Well behaved and clump-forming.

Cautions

Standard milkweed cautions.

Where it grows

Alabama, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Delaware, Georgia, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Maryland, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Vermont, Wisconsin, West Virginia

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References

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- BONAP county map: <https://bonap.net/MapGallery/County/Asclepias%20exaltata.png>

<https://milkweedusa.com/species/poke-milkweed/>