

Purple Milkweed

Asclepias purpurascens L.

The most intensely colored milkweed in eastern North America, with deep magenta-purple flower heads held upright above broad leaves, blooming a few weeks before common milkweed. Uncommon and declining nearly everywhere, and worth every effort to establish.



Kurt Stüber [1]. CC BY-SA 3.0. Wikimedia Commons.

Key facts

Field	Value	Field	Value
Status	Native	Height	2ft-4ft
Flowers	purple, magenta	Bloom	May to July
Light	Full sun, Part shade	Soil	Average, Dry
USDA zones	3-8	Leaves	opposite, ovate
Sap	Milky latex	Roots	Deep taproot, resents transplanting
Stratification	30 days cold-moist	States	35

How to identify it

- Flowers are a saturated purple-magenta, far darker than the dusty pink of common milkweed.
- Clusters are held erect at the top of the stem, not drooping.
- Blooms noticeably earlier than common milkweed.
- Leaves broad with a short abrupt tip, downy underneath.

Ecology

A species of woodland edges, savannas and open thickets, declining because fire suppression has closed those habitats. Listed as rare, threatened or endangered in more than a dozen states.

Growing

Excellent in a garden: upright, non-running and spectacular in flower. Tolerates part shade. Slow from seed and slow to establish; give it three years before judging it.

Cautions

Standard milkweed cautions. Never dig plants from the wild.

Where it grows

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

More photographs



peganum from Small Dole, England. CC BY-SA 2.0



Fritz Flohr Reynolds from USA. CC BY-SA 2.0. W



Steeppone at English Wikipedia. Public domain.

References

- Plants of the World Online: <https://powo.science.kew.org/taxon/urn:lsid:ipni.org:names:94577-1>
- GBIF: <https://www.gbif.org/species/3170271>
- iNaturalist: <https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/125380>
- BONAP county map: <https://bonap.net/MapGallery/County/Asclepias%20purpurascens.png>

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