

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.