

Solano County

Milkweed Planting Guide

Why is milkweed important?

Monarch butterflies in the West have declined by 99% over the past 20 years, largely due to agricultural use of herbicide ("Roundup Ready" GMO crops) and subsequent loss of milkweed habitat. Milkweed is the Monarch's host plant- the only species they lay their eggs on. Monarch caterpillars eat the leaves which make them un-palatable to predators. The toxins in milkweed have not been shown to be harmful to cattle in small quantities, therefore milkweed can be planted on rangelands to help revive the imperiled monarch population.



Caterpillar eating milkweed leaf
Photo: Becky Hansis O'Neill



Narrow Leaf Milkweed
Photo: Robert Perry



Showy Milkweed
Photo: Jay Chamberlain



Showy Milkweed
Photo: John Anderson

Milkweed Species in Solano County

Narrow Leaf Milkweed (*Asclepias fascicularis*)

Bloom Time: May - October

Habitat: Variable; Occurs in dry grasslands, drainages, and seeps.

How to ID: Stems are hairless and grow up to 3 ft. tall; leaves are long, narrow, and pointed at the tip; flowers are white to pale pink

Showy Milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*)

Bloom Time: May - September

Habitat: Grassy openings in dry to moist soil

How to ID: Velvety or hairy stem up to 5 ft. tall; large, pale pink flowers; leaves are large (3-7 inches), ovate, and covered in soft hairs

Heart Leaf Milkweed (*Asclepias cordifolia*)

Bloom Time: May - July

Habitat: Dry, rocky areas in chaparral and woodlands of the Coast Range

How to ID: Mostly hairless stems up to 3 ft. tall; leaves are 2-4in long and heart-shaped, being wider at the base and tapering to the tip; flowers are reddish purple with pink or white

For more information on how locate milkweed seed, visit The Xerces Society's Milkweed Seed Finder at: <https://www.xerces.org/milkweed/milkweed-seed-finder>.



Tropical Milkweed
Photo: Justin Lebar



Achillea millefolium
Photo: Diane Etchison



Baccharis pilularis
Photo: Talila Golan



Grindelia hirsutula
Photo: Laura Moon



Milkweed on rangeland
Photo: Nancy Mueller

AVOID TROPICAL MILKWEED

Tropical milkweed is not native to California and unlike native milkweed species, it does not die back in winter. This means that diseases harmful to monarch butterflies, like the parasite OE, can persist on its evergreen leaves infecting future monarch generations. Tropical milkweed can also confuse monarch butterflies into breeding during time periods when they should be overwintering.

Nectar Plants for Monarchs

Monarch butterflies need nectar to fuel their migration. Add these flowering plants to your land to support monarchs:

- *Achillea millefolium*—yarrow
- *Agastache urticifolia*—horse mint
- *Arctostaphylos* sp.—manzanita
- *Baccharis pilularis*—coyote brush
- *Baccharis salicifolia*—mule fat
- *Ceanothus* sp.—CA lilac
- *Grindelia* sp.—gumplant
- *Helianthus* sp.—sunflower
- *Heteromeles arbutifolia*—toyon
- *Monardella* sp.—coyote mint
- *Salix* sp.—willow
- *Salvia* sp.—sage
- *Solidago* sp.—goldenrod
- *Verbena lasiostachys*—vervain

Interested in planting milkweed?

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has cost-share programs available (EQIP) to assist with planting milkweed on rangeland.

For more information, contact us:

Solano County Resource Conservation District

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Your local **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** office
(707) 448-0106



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