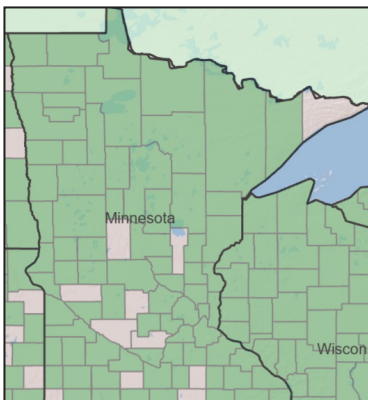


Swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)

Family: Dogbane
(*Apocynaceae*)

DESCRIPTION: The sweetly vanilla-scented, eye-catching rose-pink flowers of this showy plant are an important nectar source for pollinators, attracting many species of bees and butterflies. Swamp milkweed is the only one of Minnesota's 14 milkweed species commonly found in wetlands. Its flowers typically bloom from late June through mid-August, and sometimes even later.

USES: Swamp milkweed, sometimes called red milkweed, grows well in landscape settings. An important pollen and nectar source for pollinators, it's a preferred milkweed of monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) butterfly larva. Its high alkaloid content dissuades deer from browsing on it. Some sources deem it poisonous; sheep deaths have been attributed to eating too much of the plant.



Range Map Credit: NRCS Plants Database



Photo Credit: Eric Alms, MPCA

Planting Recommendations

Though not aggressive, swamp milkweed competes well and adds a nice splash of color to midsummer landscapes. It makes a great garden plant in sufficiently moist sites, preferring full sun to part shade. It will tolerate mesic upland locations — even clay soils that are watered regularly when conditions

are dry. Swamp milkweed typically takes three years to reach flowering stage. Like all members of the *Asclepias* genus, swamp milkweed seeds benefit from being stratified in a cool moist treatment for 30 days or more. Containerized plants are available from most native plant nurseries.

STATEWIDE WETLAND INDICATOR STATUS: FACW

ID: Swamp milkweed grows 2 to 4 feet tall. The opposite, hairless, smooth-edged leaves feature distinctive secondary parallel veins that run from the midrib to the margin. All milkweeds have specialized flowers. Their reflexed petals, hornlike “translator” structures and folded floral hoods guide targeted pollinator species to effectively catch and remove the clump of pollen called a pollinium.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Joe-Pye weed favors similar habitats and its flowers are a similar color, but the plant is larger and its leaves are hairy and whorled.

REFERENCES:
[Minnesota Wildflowers](#)

[USDA Plants Database](#)

[The Perils of Pollinia and More About Milkweed](#), June 2020, by Mary Free, Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia

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