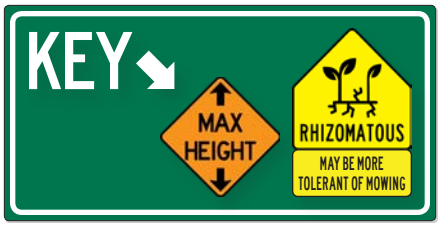
MILKWEEDS OF OKLAHOMA & TEXAS

Milkweeds (*Asclepias* spp.) are herbaceous perennial plants named for their milky sap. These plants occur in a wide range of habitats, including intact natural communities on roadsides and highly disturbed roadsides. As required host plants for monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) caterpillars, milkweeds play an essential role in the butterfly's life cycle (see reverse). Vegetation management that allows milkweeds to persist can support monarchs. This guide can help you recognize the most common native species found on roadsides in your region.



The most common milkweeds in roadsides in Oklahoma & Texas (in alphabetical order):

Antelopehorns (*A. asperula* ssp. *capricornu*)

PLANT: Multiple spreading stems, unbranched to few branches; usually smooth. **LEAVES:** Alternate; lance-shaped; usually folded lengthwise. **HABITAT:** Prairies, disturbed areas. **SOILS:** Sandy, rocky limestone, clayey, gravelly; dry. **BLOOM:** Apr–Sep; light green with touches of purple.

Broadleaf milkweed (*A. latifolia*)

PLANT: Upright, unbranched, stout stems; woolly when young to smooth with age. **LEAVES:** Opposite; oval-shaped; woolly when young to smooth with age. **HABITAT:** Prairie, disturbed areas. **SOILS:** Sandy, clayey, rocky; dry. **BLOOM:** May–Aug; white to pale green.

Zizotes milkweed (*A. oenotheroides*)

PLANT: Spreading to upright branched stout stems; smooth. **LEAVES:** Opposite; wavy edges. **HABITAT:** Prairies, ditches, fields, dunes; may survive periodic mowing and drought. **SOILS:** Sandy, rocky; dry. **BLOOM:** Apr–Nov; green with white and/or purple.

Green comet milkweed (*A. viridiflora*)

PLANT: Unbranched stems, spreading to erect; with short hairs. **LEAVES:** Opposite; lance- to oval-shaped with edges folded upward or wavy; with short hairs. **HABITAT:** Rocky prairies, old fields, dunes, forests, glades. **SOILS:** Sandy to loamy or rocky; dry–dry-mesic. **BLOOM:** Jun–Aug; light green to yellowish green.

(Continued on next page.)

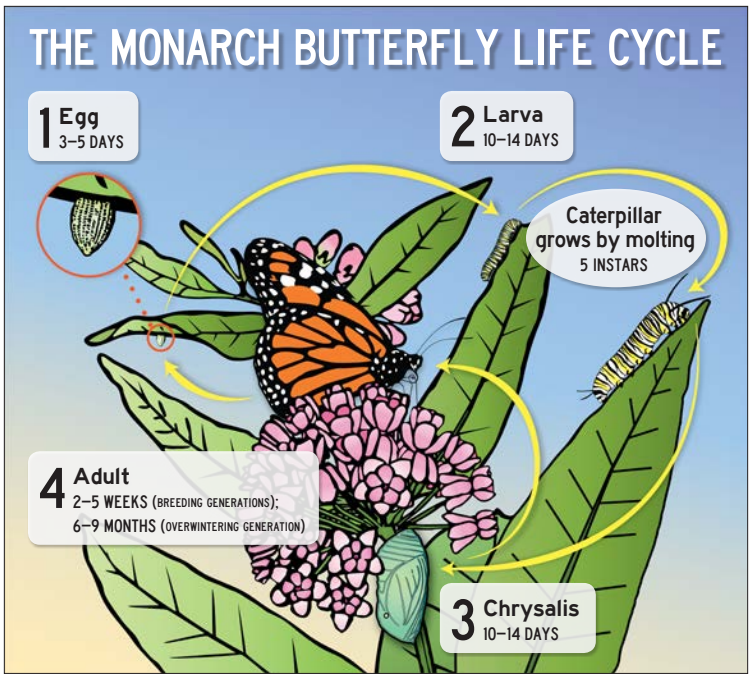
Most common milkweed species *continued*

Green antelopehorn (*A. viridis*)

PLANT: Multiple unbranched upright stems; usually smooth. **LEAVES:** Alternate; lance-shaped to oval-shaped; with wavy margins. **HABITAT:** Upland prairies, open woods, disturbed areas. **SOILS**: Sandy, rocky, clayey; dry. **BLOOM:** Mar–Sep; green with touches of purple.

Additional Resources:

- For more information on monarchs and roadsides, including monitoring, visit: tinyurl.com/MJV-Monarchs-Roadsides
- Western Monarch Milkweed Mapper: www.monarchmilkweedmapper.org
- Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation: xerces.org
- Monarch Joint Venture: monarchjointventure.org



Multiple generations of monarchs are produced over the spring and summer, with the fall generation migrating to overwintering sites. You can monitor monarchs or milkweeds; see Additional Resources above.

Less common roadside milkweeds:

Clasping milkweed (*A. amplexicaulis*)

PLANT: Unbranched, upright stems; smooth; 3′ max. **LEAVES:** Opposite; oval-shaped; wavy margins; base of leaves clasp stem. **SOILS/HABITAT:** Sandy; dry; grasslands, savannas, woodland edges. **BLOOM:** Apr–Jun; green with pink or purple.

Engelmann's milkweed (*A. engelmanniana*)

PLANT: One to a few upright, usually unbranched, stout stems; smooth; 3′ max. **LEAVES:** Alternate; narrow and linear; smooth. **SOILS/HABITAT:** Sandy, rocky or calcareous; dry; grasslands, savannas, woodlands, riparian areas. **BLOOM:** May–Sep; small, yellowish-green with purple.

Slimleaf milkweed (*A. stenophylla*)

PLANT: Unbranched, upright stems; 2′ max. **LEAVES:** Alternate; very narrow to lance-shaped; folded lengthwise; with short hairs. **SOILS/HABITAT:** Sandy, rocky; dry; prairies, meadows. **BLOOM:** Jun–Aug; yellow to pale green with touches of white.

Butterfly milkweed (*A. tuberosa*)

PLANT: One to many spreading to upright stems; with short hairs; no milky sap; 3′ max. **LEAVES:** Alternate; lance-shaped; hairy underneath. **SOILS/HABITAT:** Sandy, loamy, rocky; well-drained; prairies, old fields, open woods. **BLOOM:** Apr–Sep; orange to red or yellow.

Additional milkweeds in Oklahoma and/or Texas: *Asclepias arenaria, A. brachystephana, A. emoryi, A. glaucescens, A. hirtella, A. incarnata, A. involucrata, A. lanceolata, A. linearis, A. macrotis, A. nummularia, A. obovata, A. prostrata, A. perennis, A. pumila, A. purpurascens, A. rubra, A. scaposa, A. speciosa, A. sperryi, A. subverticillata, A. syriaca, A. texana, A. tomentosa, A. uncialis, A. variegata, A. verticillata.*

Maps & Distribution Data:

These profiles are derived from regional floras and field guides and Woodson's *The North American Species of* Asclepias (1954). Most common species are abundant across both states and are found in roadsides. Less common species might not occur in both states, have a limited distribution across a state, or may be less common in roadsides. Additional species may be uncommon in roadsides, have a small distribution in a state, or are uncommon or rare. The range maps indicate counties where species have been observed (but may be incomplete), and were created by USDA-NRCS using the latest data from the USDA's PLANTS database (https://plants.sc.egov.usda.gov).

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PHOTO CREDITS: Patrick Alexander / SEINet (*A. oenotheroides*); Jim Fowler (*A. asperula* ssp. *capricornu* [right], *A. latifolia*); Max Licher / SEINet (*A. engelmanniana*); Krista Lundgren, USFWS / flickr (*A. viridiflora*); Paul Rothrock / SEINet (*A. amplexicaulis*); Scott Seigfreid (*A. tuberosa);* Richard Spellengberg / Calphotos (*A. asperula* ssp. *capricornu* [left]); Xerces Society / Ray Moranz (*A. stenophylla*). Photographs remain under the copyright of the photographer.

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