

Common name: **Swamp milkweed**

Genus Species: ***Asclepias incarnata***



Photo credit: Rob Routledge, Sault College Bugwood.org

**Description:** Swamp milkweed is an erect, clump-forming, perennial, herbaceous plant that grows up to 5 feet tall. Its tiny pink, mauve, or white flowers are grouped together into showy, fragrant clusters. Each flower contains both male and female parts.

**Habitats:** Swamp milkweed occurs in a range of wet conditions from standing water to saturated soil. A riparian species, it is found on stream banks, pond shores, banks, and floodplains of lakes, waterways, marshes, swamps, and wet areas of prairies.

**Phenology highlight:** The flowers exude a pleasant fragrance that resembles cinnamon.

### Species facts

- Swamp milkweed is pollinated by insects including a variety of bee, wasp, beetle, and butterfly species.
- The monarch butterfly lifecycle requires milkweed since they lay their eggs only on milkweeds, including swamp milkweed.
- The seeds of swamp milkweed have long hairs, called comas, that have been used as stuffing for pillows and lifejackets.
- Younger plants can be cooked (with several changes of water) and eaten.

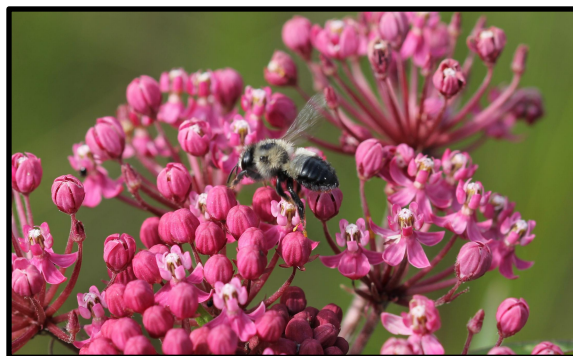
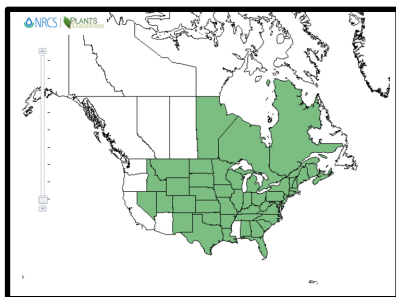


Photo credit: Rob Routledge, Sault College, Bugwood.org



**Why observe this species?** Swamp milkweed is one of the plant species observed by New York Phenology Project member organizations, and data gathered is contributed to the National Phenology Network database. The mission of this public participation in science research initiative is to educate and engage the public while collecting data that is useful for detecting broad scale patterns and changes in the natural world.

**Tip for observing this species:** Even when completely empty seed pods remain on the plant well into winter, record "No" for all fruit phenophases.

Map credit: USDA, NRCS. 2014. The PLANTS Database <http://plants.usda.gov>, 18 December 2015). National Plant Data Team, Greensboro, NC 27401-4901 USA

For more information about phenology and the New York Phenology Project (NYPP), please visit the NYPP website ([www.nyphenologyproject.org](http://www.nyphenologyproject.org)) and the USA-NPN website ([www.usanpn.org](http://www.usanpn.org)).

## Swamp milkweed *Asclepias incarnata*

**Note:** flower and fruit phenophases are nested so you may need to record more than one phenophase in each group; for example, if you record **Y** for “open flowers” you should also record **Y** for “flowers or flower buds.”



**Initial growth** New growth is visible after a period of no growth as new shoots breaking through the soil surface. For seedlings, initial growth includes the two small elongated leaves (cotyledons) before the first true leaf unfolds.



**Leaves** One or more live, fully unfolded leaves are visible. For seedlings, consider only true leaves, not the two small leaves (cotyledons) found on the stem immediately after the seedling emerges. Do not include fully dried or dead leaves.



**Flowers or flower buds** One or more fresh open or unopened flowers or flower buds are visible on the plant. Include flower buds that are still developing, but do not include wilted or dried flowers.



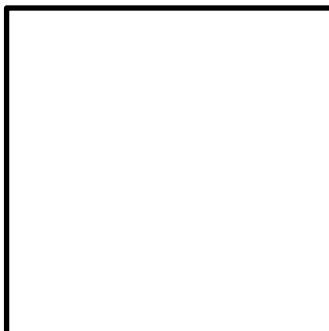
**Open flowers** One or more open, fresh flowers are visible. Flowers are open when the reproductive parts (male stamens or female pistils) are visible between unfolded flower parts. Do not include wilted or dried flowers.



**Fruits** One or more fruits are visible on the plant. Swamp milkweed fruit is large and pod-like and changes from green to tan or brown and splits open to expose seeds with fluff. Do not include empty fruits that have dropped all their seeds.



**Ripe Fruits** One or more ripe fruits are visible on the plant. Swamp milkweed fruit is ripe when it has turned tan or brown and split open to expose seeds with fluff. Do not include empty fruits that have dropped all their seeds.



**Recent fruit or seed drop** One or more mature fruits or seeds have dropped or been removed from the plant since your last visit. Do not include immature fruits that fell before ripening or empty pods.



**Milkweed Pollination Adaptations** Five tiny petals are each crowned with a nectar cup. Within each cup is an upward curving horn. When an insect lands on the blossom, it slips on the horn and its leg falls between the cups picking up pollen. The pollen may fertilize the next flower the insect visits.

All phenophases pictured here