

GARDENING WITH MILKWEED

SELECTING MILKWEED SPECIES

Moraga falls within the western monarch's critical "coastal range" it is important this geographic area provide nectar and larvae host habitat.

Plant only nectar plants, not milkweed, if a location is within five miles (as the crow flies) from a monarch overwintering site.

⇒ Our closest overwintering site is Lake Merritt, Oakland (about 8 miles away and

⇒ separated by a low range of coastal hills) Moraga (94556) is okay

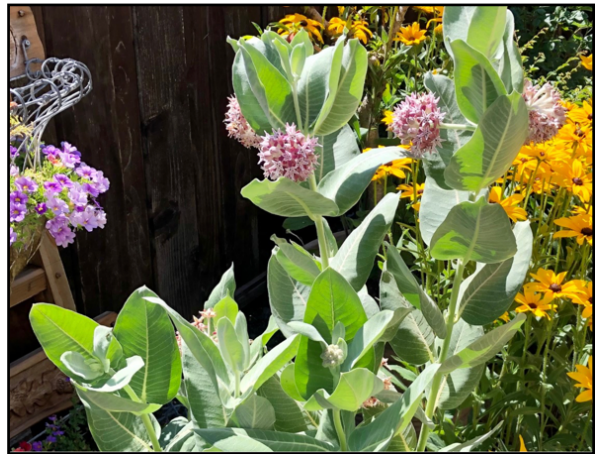
⇒ Lafayette (94549) and Orinda (94563) are also okay

Plant only milkweed species native to California. Ideally, plant milkweed species native to this area. Only one milkweed is native to Moraga Narrowleaf (*Asclepias fascicularis*). It blooms May to October and is rhizomatous.

Narrowleaf Milkweed



Showy Milkweed



Milkweed Approved to Plant in Lamorinda	Milkweed Not Advised to Plant in Lamorinda
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrow Leaf (<i>Asclepias fascicularis</i>) • Showy (<i>A. speciosa</i>) • California (<i>A. californica</i>) • Woolly (<i>A. vestita</i>) • Heartleaf (<i>A. cordifolia</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Milkweed (<i>A. syriaca</i>) • Butterfly Weed (<i>A. tuberosa</i>) • Tropical Milkweed (<i>A. curassavica</i>) • Other Milkweeds

OTHER RECOMMENDED MILKWEEDS

- ⇒ Showy milkweed (*A. speciosa*) Native to Solano County, blooms May to August, rhizomatous.
- ⇒ California milkweed (*A. californica*) Native to Contra Costa County, blooms April to July, little to no clonality.
- ⇒ Woolly milkweed (*A. vestita*) Native to Contra Costa County, blooms April to July, little to no clonality .
- ⇒ Heartleaf milkweed (*A. cordifolia*) Native to Contra County, blooms April to July, little to no clonality, dry rocky soil.

Please, note that California, Woolly and Heartleaf Milkweeds may not be readily available.

Prioritize planting early emerging milkweeds (California, Woolly, Heartleaf) if you can find them. Ideally, plant both early and summer emerging milkweed to extend leaf and bloom duration. You can also extend flowering periods by pruning milkweed blooms after they have withered.

MILKWEEDS TO AVOID:

- Although critical to monarchs in North America, Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) is not native to California and it can spread very aggressively via its rhizomes (lateral tuberous elements, 9 inches deep; these are not its primary roots). Do not plant this species in Moraga gardens.
- Butterfly Weed (*A. tuberosa*) is lovely and sold locally, *but is NOT native to CA, do not plant*. This has been confirmed with the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, despite a database generally referencing native to CA but not providing county data.
- Tropical milkweed (*A. curassavica*) is not a CA native, doesn't die back in the winter and can disturb migration patterns and spread harmful pathogens (*Ophryocystis elektroscirrha* (OE)). Do not plant.
 - ⇒ Remove tropical milkweed (*A. curassavica*) from Moraga and replace it with the native milkweed species above or with monarch specific nectar plants.
 - ⇒ Other common names for tropical milkweed include: bloodflower or blood flower, cotton bush, hierba de la cucaracha, Mexican butterfly weed, redhead, scarlet milkweed, and wild ipecacuanha. Several cultivars exist including 'Silky Gold' and 'Butterfly Red'.

PURCHASING MILKWEED PLANTS

Source milkweed plants and seed from entities that abstain from using *systemic* pesticides – specifically neonicotinoid (neonics) pesticides.

- ⇒ Ask nursery staff whether plants have been systemically treated, or purchase from local nurseries that grow their own stock and can guarantee plants have not been systemically treated.
- ⇒ If you are buying milkweed from a nursery using *topical* BT insecticide, wait three months to introduce your plants to a Monarch area. Ask your supplier about any practices that might impact plants going into a Monarch waystation.

PLANTING DESIGNS AND ESTABLISHMENT

- Ideally, plant a total of 10 or more milkweed plants in a 100 square foot waystation.
- Plant milkweed in clumps (three in a group), but do not overcrowd them. Plant narrowleaf 1 foot apart; and showy 4 feet apart.
- Some milkweeds tolerate part sun better than others, especially in hotter areas. These will tolerate part sun in Moraga:
 - Narrowleaf (*A. fascicularis*)
 - Heartleaf (*A. cordifolia*)
- Know which species of milkweed best suits your site; some species spread more aggressively than others. Most require full sun and will not tolerate part sun.
 - ⇒ Milkweeds are not considered noxious weeds and are a beneficial wildflower. Understand growing patterns associated with your species.
 - ⇒ Some of our approved milkweeds spread moderately via their rhizomes, but are unlikely to present an ongoing, unmanageable problem in home gardens.
 - ⇒ If you want to control spread: don't overwater; plant in confined spaces or raised beds; remove unwanted emerging rhizomes by hand; clip off seed pods before they open in Fall and/or prune excess rootstock during the winter when milkweed is dormant.

These varieties spread more than California, Woolly and Heartleaf:

- Showy (*A. Speciosa*) “moderate spread”,
- Narrowleaf (*A. Fascicularis*) “has potential to become weedy”
(We do not know which of these two species spreads more.)

- Allow one year for milkweeds to establish themselves in your garden and expect blooms to first arrive in years two or three. Milkweeds planted from rhizomes may bloom year one.
- Provide enough water in the first year or two for young milkweed roots to withstand CA heat and drought.
- Milkweed will die back in the winter. Approved milkweeds may be cut down to within inches of the ground each year by November primarily for aesthetic reasons.

MILKWEED CAUTIONS

- Milkweed can irritate skin and eyes. It is a good idea to wash your hands or wear gloves when handling, especially for people with sensitive skin.
- If ingested, very large quantities of milkweed can be toxic to humans and pets. Milkweed tastes bad (bitter); animals generally do not eat it. Narrowleaf and Showy have very low toxicities.

PEST CONTROL

- Milkweed will attract oleander aphids and will generally tolerate these and other feeding insects.
 - Should you wish to control aphids, do so early, before they multiply into large colonies. It is best to remove them by hand. Strong water streams and insecticides of any kind can harm monarch eggs and caterpillars.
 - Use insecticidal soaps only on small areas and if there are no visible signs of monarch eggs, caterpillars nor other beneficial insects. Rinse with water to avoid burning any foliage.
 - Do not apply horticultural oils nor contact insecticides.
- Milkweed may attract milkweed bugs. They will not harm the plant nor the monarchs. Control as you would aphids.
- Expect your happy caterpillars to feast heavily on your milkweed leaves and perhaps leave them less than lovely. It is best to conceal some milkweeds, such as narrowleaf, with more attractive, nectar-rich plants.