

# Milkweed Plug Planting Instructions

USDA-NRCS Jamie L. Whitten Plant Materials Center

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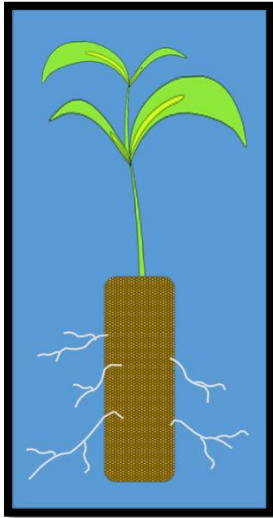


Figure 1

These milkweed seedlings were grown in “jiffy pots” or plugs made from peat moss (fig.1); the mesh surrounding the plug is biodegradable and does not need to be removed prior to planting.

**SITE SELECTION:** Butterfly milkweed will perform better on a well-drained site. Swamp milkweed, as the name implies, prefers moist conditions. Both species require full sun.

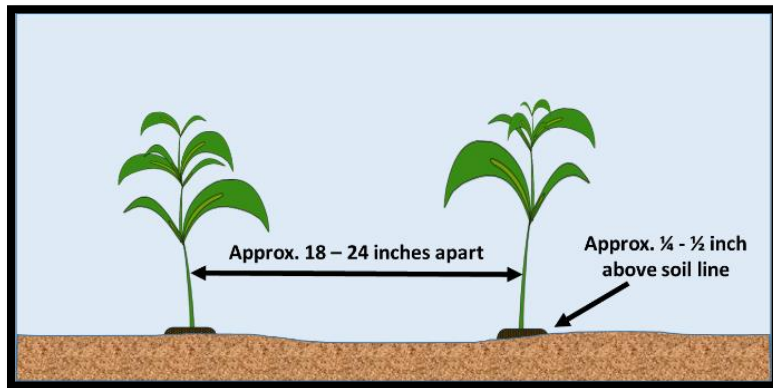


Figure 2

**PLANTING:** Seedlings should be planted approx. 18-24 in. apart; top of plug should remain approx.  $\frac{1}{4}$  -  $\frac{1}{2}$  in.

above soil line (fig. 2). Plant in blocks rather than long rows. A hand trowel works well for digging planting hole. Avoid planting too deep (fig. 3)! Water milkweed seedlings after planting.

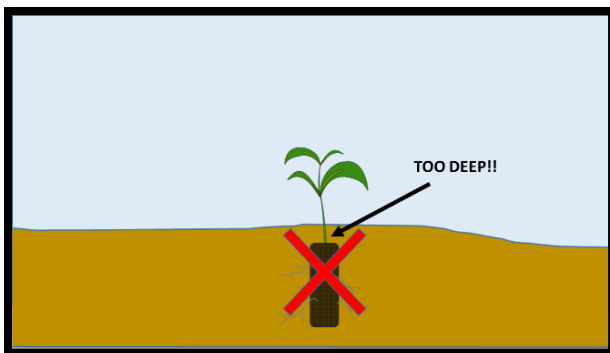


Figure 3

**CARE:** Check soil for adequate moisture periodically during the next 2-3 months. Water seedlings if soil is dry but avoid overwatering. Competing weeds may need to be removed periodically. Plants generally do not require supplemental fertilization. Avoid using insecticides/herbicides in

areas planted in milkweed. Seedlings may not bloom the first year but leaves may still provide a food source for monarch butterfly caterpillars.

# Milkweed Seed Planting Instructions

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Stratified butterfly milkweed and swamp milkweed seeds in these packets have been in moist, cold storage for 3 months to break seed dormancy and increase germination. Keep seed packs refrigerated until planting time!

**SITE SELECTION:** The butterfly milkweed will perform better on a well-drained site. Swamp milkweed, as the name implies, prefers moist conditions. Both species require full sun. Plants are poisonous to livestock so avoid planting in pastures.

**SOWING SEED:** Seed should be sown as soon as possible in loose soil after shallow cultivation. Lightly cover with soil and water well. Seeds should sprout in 1-2 weeks.

**CARE:** Keep soil damp but not excessively wet until plants are 3-5 inches tall. Plants generally do not require supplemental fertilization. Competing weeds may need to be removed periodically. Avoid using insecticides/herbicides in areas planted in milkweed. Seedlings may not bloom the first year but leaves may still provide a food source for monarch butterfly caterpillars. Periodic mowing or burning will not kill well-established plants, but may harm young plants.



Butterfly milkweed



Swamp milkweed

# Milkweed Information

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## Butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)

Butterfly milkweed is a perennial herb 1 to 2½ ft. tall with bright orange-red flowers and is often found growing in clumps beside roadways, on abandoned farmlands, and in other open areas throughout the United States. Butterfly milkweed grows on sandy, loamy, or rocky limestone soils of prairies, open woodlands, roadsides, and disturbed areas similar to other milkweed species. The flowers attract honeybees, green metallic bees, various wasps, and butterflies such as fritillaries and swallowtails; leaves are larval food of the monarch butterfly. Ruby-throated hummingbirds also visit butterfly milkweed flowers.



## Swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)



Swamp milkweed is a native perennial growing 3 – 6 ft. tall with pink flowers. Primarily found in moist habitats such as wet meadows, pond shores, stream banks, wet woods, swamps, and marshes, it will also grow in drier areas such as prairies, fields, and roadsides. Swamp milkweed is a favored larval food of monarch and queen butterfly. Various other butterflies and hummingbirds consume nectar from the flowers.