



# Asclepias tuberosa

## (Common) Butterfly-weed

Tried and True  
Native Plant Selections  
for the Mid-Atlantic



Butterfly-weed is one of the showiest native\* wildflowers. Summer waves of orange blossoms brighten open fields, woods, and waysides. Later, spindle-shaped fruit (follicles) pierce the air in shades of green, yellow, brown. When follicles split open, the seeds' silky threads glisten in the sun. The Virginia Native Plant Society selected Butterfly-weed as Wildflower of the Year in 1992.

Perennial	Flowers and Foliage with Monarchs, Fruit**
Height: 1–3 feet	
Spread: 1–1½ feet	
Bloom Color: Orange	
Characteristics	
Single-stemmed to multi-stemmed clumps	
Lance-shaped leaves on hairy stems	
Orange flowers in clusters bloom June to August	
Spindle-shaped follicles, 3–6 inches long	
Self-seeds when follicles split open	
Attributes	 
Tolerates dry/poor soil and drought; no serious pests or diseases; deer seldom severely damage	
Seed follicles used in dried flower arrangements	
Ethnobotanic uses; toxic when ingested without sufficient preparation or in sufficient quantity	
Attracts a variety of beneficial and other insects and hummers; larval host for Monarch butterfly	
Growing and Maintenance Tips	Excellent Replacement for
Soil Requirements: Average, well-drained	<i>Buddleia</i> species - Butterfly Bush
Light Requirements: Sun, Partial Shade	<i>Coronilla varia</i> - Crown Vetch
Water Requirements: Dry, Moist	<i>Lythrum salicaria</i> - Purple Loosestrife
Seedlings transplant well; deep tap roots do not	<i>Sedum</i> species
Flowers produced once plants are 2–3 years old	
Dead foliage or flowers may harbor Monarch eggs or larvae so do not remove them until after frost	<p>*It is common from central PA through VA. **A tattered-winged monarch butterfly pictured in July was near the end of its life cycle. If successful, the monarch larva pictured eating leaves in September would have become a butterfly, migrated to Mexico, and returned to the US in early spring to mate. The milkweed bug nymphs pictured on the follicle eat the seeds, helping to regulate milkweed populations.</p>
Use in borders or in butterfly or meadow gardens	
Hardiness: USDA Zones 3–9	
<i>developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria</i>	

Images by Mary Free, Bluemont Park, Sunny Garden, and Glencarlyn Garden