

How to Grow Milkweed Seed

Asclepias incarnata – SWAMP MILKWEED



Monarch caterpillars rely solely on milkweed as their food source in northern climates. While caterpillars feed on common milkweed as well, it is generally considered a noxious weed. This variety, however, is native to Canada and a great choice for gardeners and butterflies alike! Swamp milkweed prefers wet, heavy soils around the edges of ponds and other wetlands.

We recommend starting your seeds indoors – although you can also plant outdoors in prepared beds. Either way, your seeds will need to be tricked into thinking that they have passed through a winter outside (“vernalization”). Place your seeds in potting soil or in a moist paper towel and put them in the fridge for 3 – 6 weeks before planting or follow the instructions below.

Sowing your seeds

1. Place your seeds in a paper towel and soak for 24 hours before planting. This will shock the seeds and improve germination rate.
2. Fill your flats with potting soil and thoroughly soak.
3. Scatter the seeds $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch apart, and then cover with about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch of soil.
4. Gently mist the soil surface with water to dampen and cover each flat with a clear plastic cover or bag to prevent the seeds from drying out.
6. Place under a light, in a sunny window or in a greenhouse, ideally 22–25° C. Your seeds should sprout in 7–10 days.



Caring for your seedlings

1. Keep your soil moist by watering from underneath. You can water from the bottom by placing your flat in a sink or tray filled with 2 inches of water and wait until you start to see the moisture seep through to the surface.
2. Your soil should be kept moist but not wet.
3. Allow your seeds to grow to about 3–4 inches, for 4–6 weeks before transplanting. Plant outside after the fear of the last frost.

For more about milkweed or the Monarch butterfly, visit: www.monarchwatch.org