



California Native Milkweed Growing Guide

Thank you for your purchase of a California native Milkweed and for helping to increase habitat for Monarchs and other butterflies. There are a few things you need to know about this plant.

Select the Right Location

Milkweed isn't picky about soil, except for preferring it dry and well drained. Also, although they can tolerate a bit of partial shade, Milkweeds do best in full sun. Any companion plants should have similar cultural needs.

Practice Patience

California Native Milkweed doesn't look very California Native in its small mailing pot when we mail it to you, especially if we ship it before June when the plant is dormant. In fact, even after planting, it takes about a year for a California Native Milkweed to look pretty.

So you may want to follow the advice of novelist Willa Cather who was famous for her books about pioneer life. In *O Pioneers*, Cather wrote, "Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience."

Respect the Roots

The root system of these plants is largely what you have purchased. Very little top growth happens before the second year of growth, when the plant can literally erupt from the ground. These plants were 6 to 9 months old when we sent them. **IT IS VITALLY IMPORTANT THAT YOU DO NOT BREAK UP THE ROOT BALL WHEN PLANTING!** Extreme care is called for. And a reminder – we do not recommend these species as container plants.

Plant in Masses

Massing a group of perhaps six milkweeds is more attractive to butterflies than one or two plants. Also, don't limit your butterfly garden to milkweeds. Add some Anisse Hyssop (*Agastache rugosa* 'Heronswood Mist'), a Variegated Butterfly Bush (*Buddleja davidii* 'Harlequin'), a huge Saint Catherine's Lace bush (*Eriogonum giganteum*) and nectar-rich *Salvias* such as Autumn Sages (*Salvia greggii* spp.) and Mountain Sages (*Salvia microphylla* spp.)

Remember to research the mature size of all the plants you intend to grow so you can plan for sufficient spacing between them. This will increase air circulation, which helps to avoid fungal leaf diseases. It will also make it easier for butterflies and caterpillars to navigate the garden.

Expect Early Visitors

Monarchs and other butterflies may begin laying eggs on your Milkweed plants before they are even a foot tall. Their caterpillars may chew up much of the foliage pretty badly during the first season. However, keep in mind the ultimate result – beautiful butterflies. Also, these are tough plants and they should come back for next year's season of tiny wildlife.

Butterfly eggs are clear or whitish in color. They are about the size of a speck of sand and can take about three days to hatch.

Avoid Overwatering

Although it is necessary to provide regular watering for any new transplant, take care not to soak your California Native Milkweed. It is a drought-resistant plant that likes its soil on the dry side once established. After all, it is accustomed to life in tough environments, such as along highway embankments.

Once your California Native Milkweeds are established, deep water them (about 1 inch of moisture) no more than once a week. These are ideal plants for dry gardens, so less frequent watering works as well.

Please feel to contact us with any questions you may have about this purchase or other FBTS plants you might like to buy.