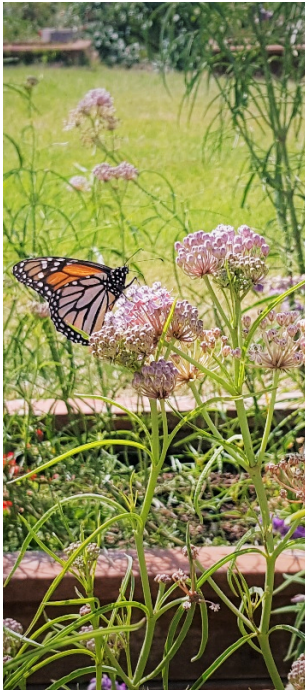










California Narrowleaf Milkweed

Milkweed is the single most important source of food for the threatened monarch butterfly, and planting a patch or two in your landscape is an important contribution to the continued existence of the species. The butterflies use the plants for all stages of their lifecycle, so watching the caterpillars feast on leaves, create their chrysalises, then mature and hatch into butterflies can be an entertaining and informative family activity. (But warn children about the toxic nature of milkweed leaves.) With careful observation, you may see all phases of the life-cycle in a single year, from eggs hatching into tiny caterpillars, to caterpillars magically transforming into butterflies, to butterflies laying new eggs.

	 Sun Full Sun	 Moisture Low, Moderate - High	 Summer Irrigation Max 2x / month once established
	 Ease of Care Moderately Easy	 Cold Tolerance Tolerates cold to 5° F	 Soil Drainage Fast, Medium, Slow
Botanical Name	<i>Asclepias fascicularis</i>	Common Name	Narrowleaf or California Milkweed
Plant Type	Herbaceous perennial	Bloom Time	Summer, Fall
Mature Size	1.7 – 3.3 ft tall, 1 ft wide	Flower Color	White, Lavender
Sun Exposure	Full sun	Hardiness Zones	Zone 9 (SF Bay Area)
Fertilizer	None Necessary	Planting Depth (Seeds)	1"
Soil pH	6.0 - 8.0	Plant Spacing	18"
Soil Type	Any well-drained soil; tolerates clay soil and poor, dry conditions		
NOTE 1:	Can be toxic to children or pets if consumed in large amounts		
NOTE 2:	Can be a bit invasive, plant where you can manage it or where it's okay to spread		
Water:	Needs water for only the first year or two until the tap root is established.		
Native Area	Throughout CA except on coast and deserts		

How to Grow Milkweed Plants: Plant milkweed about 18 inches apart; their rhizomatous roots will quickly fill in the space between plants. There's no need to fertilize milkweed plants, as they tolerate poor soils. Your biggest maintenance challenge will probably be in containing them. *Asclepias fascicularis* spreads both via seeds and [rhizomes](#), forming colonies. You may wish to remove the seed pods before they open. Otherwise, they will spread to distant corners of your yard (and beyond), thanks to the silky appendages that allow the seeds to waft on the slightest breeze.

Planting for Monarch Butterflies: If you are planting common milkweed to encourage monarch butterflies, create a small patch of milkweed that includes at least six plants. (Though one plant will often spread to equal at least six.) Include a nearby water source for your butterflies; a birdbath or a large potting saucer filled with water will work fine. Planting other [pollinator-friendly plants](#) in a comprehensive butterfly garden is a good idea.

It is important not to use pesticides in a butterfly garden, as the same chemicals that kill destructive insects will also kill butterflies and their larva.

- Sources:** Calscap: <https://calscap.org/Asclepias-fascicularis-/>
The Spruce: <https://www.thespruce.com/milkweed-plants-monarch-butterfly-host-2132954>

Special thanks to the folks at Mid City Nursery in American Canyon for the generous discount on Narrowleaf Milkweed plants for the Monarch Milkweed Project