

Fewflower milkweed

(*Asclepias lanceolata*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms.

Fewflower milkweed is a delicate perennial wildflower found in swamps and moist to wet pinelands and prairies throughout Florida. Its stunning orange to red flowers typically bloom late spring through fall. Like all members of the *Asclepias* genus, Fewflower milkweed is a larval host plant for Monarch, Queen and Soldier butterflies. The plant contains a milky latex that is toxic to most animals, but Monarch, Queen and Soldier caterpillars are adapted to feed on them despite the chemical defense. The flowers are an important nectar source for bees and wasps.



Photo by Emily Bell

Flowers are born in terminal umbels. Each flower bears a five-lobed calyx and five-lobed corolla. Corolla lobes are reflexed. Often mistaken for petals are five hoods (or petaloid appendages) that form an upright corona – a characteristic typical of milkweed flowers. Leaves are long (4–8 inches), linear to lanceolate, with short petioles. They are oppositely arranged. Stems are slender and smooth. Seeds are born in erect follicles that dry and split open as the fruit matures. Each seed is attached to a white silky pappus that catches the wind and aids in dispersal.

The genus *Asclepias* is named for Asclepius, the Greek god of healing. The species epithet *lanceolata* refers to the lanceolate or lance-shaped leaves.

Family: Apocynaceae (Dogbane family)

Native range: Nearly throughout

To see where natural populations of Fewflower milkweed have been vouchered, visit www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.

Lifespan: Perennial

Soil: Moist to wet sandy or calcareous soils

Exposure: Full sun to minimal shade

Growth habit: 2–3'+ tall

Fewflower milkweed is not generally commercially available. Visit a natural area to see it.



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