

# Clasping milkweed

(*Asclepias amplexicaulis*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary\\_of\\_botanical\\_terms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms).

Clasping milkweed is a late spring- through summer- blooming milkweed that occurs in dry sandy areas from sandhills to pine savannahs, open woodlands and fallow fields. Although it has a broad distribution across the eastern US, it is relatively rare in much of its range. In Florida, it is most common in the Panhandle, becoming uncommon into North Central and Northeast Florida and rare into Central Florida.



Photo by Emily Bell

One of our tallest native milkweeds, its single glabrous stems rise up to 4 feet high and are adorned with large ovate waxy leaves. The common name Clasping is in reference to the leaves, which are oppositely arranged and sessile, giving them an appearance of clasping around the stem. Another distinguishing feature of the leaves is their wavy margins. Flowers occur in solitary terminal clusters of 15–80 individual flowers. The individual flowers are born on 1-inch stalks and have 5 extremely reflexed pink to greenish petals and pink to purplish upright coronas.

Like all members of the *Asclepias* genus, Clasping 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.

**Family:** Apocynaceae (Dogbane family)

**Native range:** North Florida and scattered occurrences into central Florida

*To see where natural populations of Clasping milkweed have been vouchered, visit [www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu](http://www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu).*

**Lifespan:** Perennial

**Soil:** Sand

**Exposure:** Full sun to part shade

**Growth habit:** Up to 4 feet

Clasping milkweed is not generally commercially available. Visit a natural area to see them.



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