

PLANTING MILKWEEED SEED IN IOWA:

1. Plant seed on soil that has been tilled or loosened with a spade, fork, or trowel
2. Plant seed at the surface of the soil. Then lightly rake soil to help the seed make good contact or water with a sprinkler to do the same. Don't plant the seed below more than ¼ inch of soil or it will not grow.
3. Mark the location you planted so you will not forget in the spring. Then leave the seed to the cold.

Two milkweed species are still available while supplies last.

Common milkweed is the plant that most people recognize as milkweed. It can grow 6+ feet tall once established and has a deep rhizomous root structure that will result in many more milkweeds growing in the same area in future years. If you plant this milkweed be sure you have room and don't be afraid to pull out new shoots that are growing where you don't want them. Common milkweed has a pink ball of flowers that blooms in July and is very fragrant and attractive to pollinators for its nectar. If shorter plants are desired, the stem can be cut back to 12 inches and branches will sprout back.

Swamp milkweed is a plant that can handle wetter soil locations, but it does not need to have wet soil. It grows 4-5 feet tall and the stem often branches. It has a shallower root system and can be easily split and transplanted. The plant will likely have 1 stem the first year, and if it does well, will often produce more stems in the same location in following years, but it does not spread from the location. Swamp milkweed has smaller pink clusters of blossoms at the end of the stems and will bloom through August if the flowers are trimmed off after blooming. Flowers are not as fragrant, but are also high in nectar and attract many pollinators.

Both of these species are used by monarch caterpillars preferentially over other local native species including whorled, poke and butterfly milkweeds.

Meadow Blazingstar is a favorite flower for migrating fall monarchs. Be patient with this plant when growing from seed as it may be 3-4 years before the first bloom. The first year seedling will look much like a blade of grass above ground, but the root will already be a tiny bulb. In year two, it will produce larger leaves and a sturdy bulb below ground before usually flowering in year three and beyond. Plant seed as you do milkweed seed.