

BUTTERFLY WEED

Asclepias tuberosa



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Range

Butterfly weed really lives up to its name. It attracts a wide range of butterflies to the abundant **nectar** that it produces. Butterfly weed belongs to the milkweed family. Unlike other members of its group it doesn't ooze a sticky white sap if damaged.



Plants

BUTTERFLY WEED



Asclepias tuberosa

Appearance

Height: 1½ to 2 feet

Flower size: Flower clusters are 2-4 inches across

Flower color: Orange or yellow

Butterfly weeds are medium-sized plants that get bushier as they grow older. They form clumps of upright stalks with narrow pointed leaves topped by orange yellow clusters of flowers.

Planting Information

Soil: Well drained sand, loam, clay or limestone

Sunlight: Full sun to partial shade

Spacing: 2 feet apart

Lifespan: Long lived **perennial**, butterfly weed may take as long as 4 years before it reaches full size.

Habitat

Butterfly weed is found throughout the state of Texas but is more common in the eastern two-thirds. This species is widespread in the eastern half of the U.S.

Now You Know!

- › Butterfly weed stores food and water in a large **taproot**. This allows it to survive during the long dry Texas summers.
- › Because it is adapted to dry conditions butterfly weed is more likely to die from too much water than not enough. Too much water causes its roots to rot!
- › Butterfly weed is occasionally used by Monarchs as a caterpillar food plant but is not preferred because it contains too little poison!

Life Cycle

Plant type: Perennial

Bloom time: April-September

Method of reproduction: Seeds, root division

Planting time: Late summer and early fall

Legend Has It ...

Pioneers and native Americans used boiled butterfly weed roots to treat diarrhea, asthma and other respiratory illnesses. The down from milkweed seeds was spun to make candlewicks. The young seed pods were boiled with several changes of water and eaten like okra.

Milkweeds & Man

- › Most native milkweeds are unattractive plants that are considered weeds by farmers and gardeners.
- › Butterfly weed produces attractive flowers that look good in gardens and help attract butterflies.
- › People are learning that many native plants are attractive, easy to grow and require very little water and chemicals.
- › Plants that require little water are called **xerophytes**. When they are planted together they produce gardens called **xeriscapes**. Xeriscapes need little watering after they are established.