Common Milkweed

Asclepias syriaca

Plantae > Magnoliopsidae > Gentinales > Asclepiadaceae

USDA Plant Website - plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=ASSY

Heroic Milkweed - www.csmonitor/The-Culture/Gardening/2008/1026/the-heroic-milkweed

MDC Website - mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/field-guide/common-milkweed

January | February | March | April | May | June | July | August | September | October | November | December

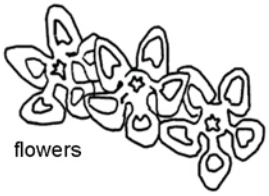
Aposomatic Coloration - when species use combinations of black, orange, red and/or yellow to warn predators they taste bad or are poisonous

These three insects use black and red or orange colors to warn predators they taste bad

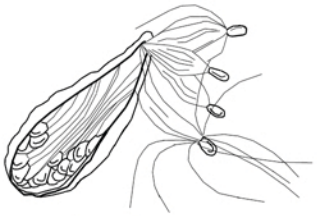
red milkweed beetle
Tetraopes tetraophthalmus

milkweed bug
Oncopeltus fasciatus

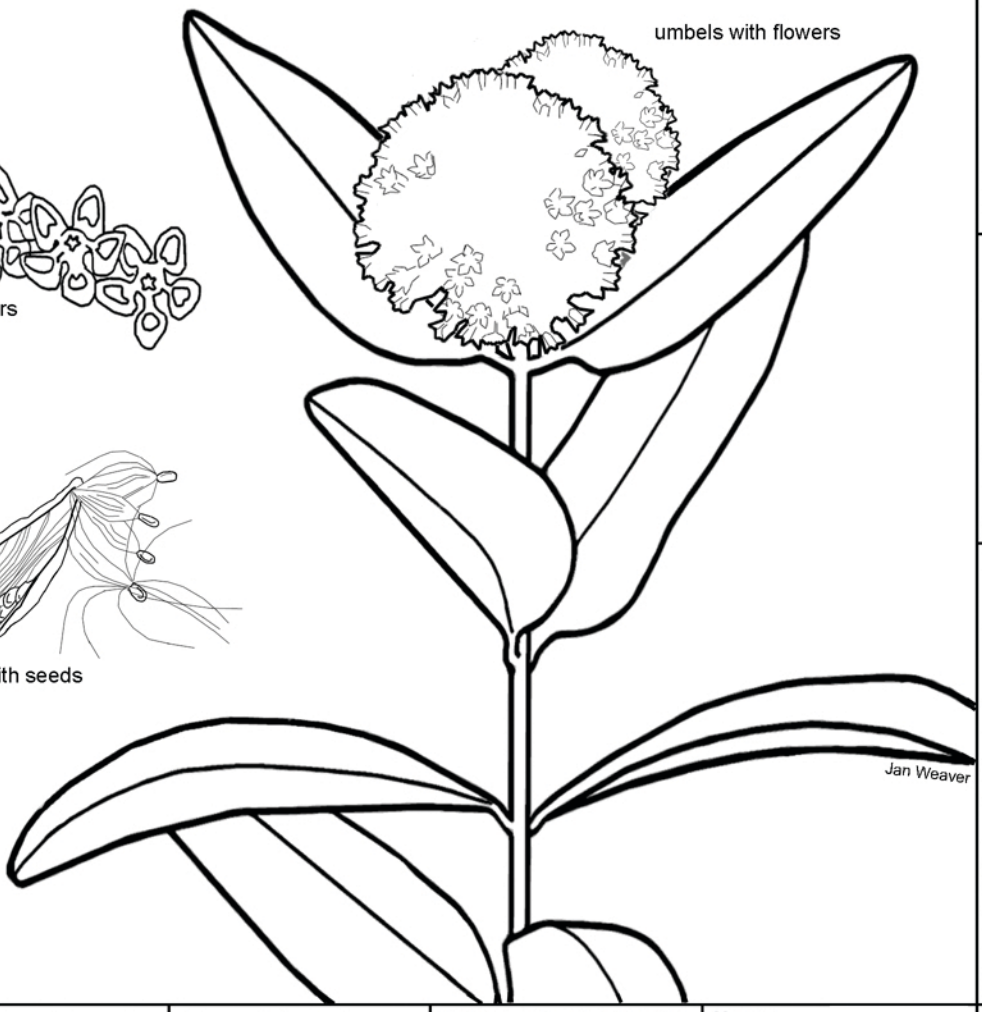
Monarch butterfly
Danaus plexippus



flowers



pod with seeds



Coloring Guide
Leaves, stems and pods are light to medium green. Flowers are pale purple, mauve or pink with some white. Seeds are brown with long silky white hairs.

Size
Plants are 1 to 2 m (3 to 6 ft) tall, leaves are 7 to 25 cm (2.8 to 10") long and 3 to 12 cm (1.2 to 4.8") wide. Flowers are 1-2 cm (.4 to .8") in diam and in bunches of 20-130 on umbels

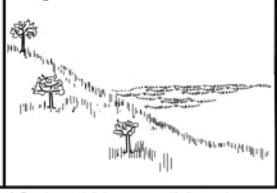
Human Connection
Silky seed hairs were collected in WWII as substitute for Kapok, which only grew on islands held by the Japanese. This milkweed "floss" was used for insulation and flotation devices

What eats Milkweed
Vertebrates (mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians) avoid milkweed because it is bitter and poisonous. However, several species of insects not only feed on it, but take up toxins in the plant to protect themselves: milkweed beetle milkweed bug, Monarch butterfly

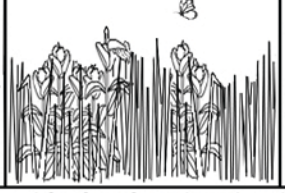
North American Distribution

Missouri Distribution

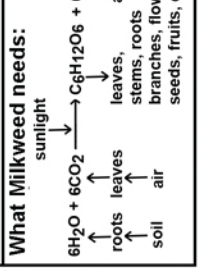
Habitat (home/food/water)
grasslands, meadows, fields, railroad and road edges and waste areas



Home
dry sandy soils, mixed with other sun-loving grasses and forbs



What Milkweed needs:



MO Species Coloring Sheets at www.meea.org /Copyright July 2013 Jan Weaver/May be used for free for educational purposes