

Asclepias tuberosa or Butterfly Weed



A native perennial plant with showy orange blooms that is 12-18" tall. It is found in sunny dry pine barrens, sandy fields and roadsides. Flowers bloom in July and visited by many species of pollinating insects. The plant may develop as a single central stem, particularly when young, or branch outward

to form a small bush in appearance. The alternate leaves are medium green or yellowish green, and slightly shiny notwithstanding the presence of tiny hairs. They are linear or broadly linear in shape, about 3" long and 1/2" wide, with smooth margins. Unlike other milkweeds, this plant has a clear sap, and the level of toxic cardiac glycosides is consistently low (although other toxic compounds may be present).

Butterfly Weed performs best in well drained sandy acid soil in full (hot) sun. This plant will flourish in other kinds of soil if the site is well-drained; it is excellent in a dry garden or sandy meadow. Sometimes the lower leaves will turn yellow, or the taproot will rot, if there is too much moisture in the ground. Also, if the taproot of a young plant is too close to the soil surface, it may not overwinter successfully due to heaving. Otherwise, Butterfly Milkweed is easy to grow, although somewhat slow to develop.