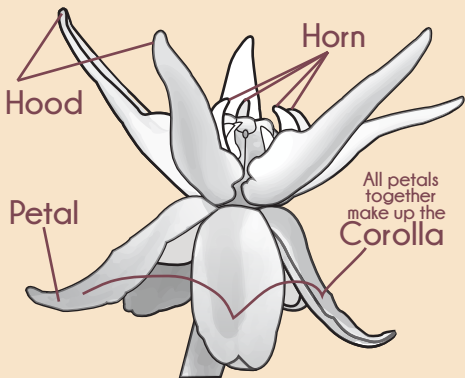


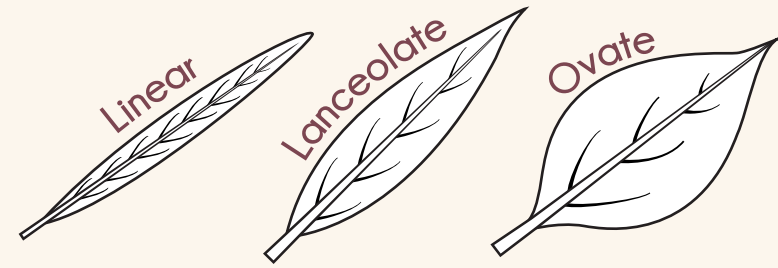
# Milkweed Identification Guide

Milkweeds (*Asclepias*) are distinctive for their milky sap and their simple, smooth-edged leaves, and, of course, for their woody pods that contain hundreds of silky-haired seeds borne away on the wind. Their leaves are attached to the stem either in pairs opposite each other, or in whorls (3 or more attached at the same node). They vary from nearly as wide as long (ovate to rectangular), to much longer than wide (lanceolate to linear). The flower head is an umbel, i.e., having all of the flowers' pedicels (short branches between the flower and the stalk) coming from the same point and ascending in all directions. Milkweed flowers are very unusual. The five petals that form the corolla are folded downwards, exposing a unique crown of hoods and horns that surrounds the stigma. Sometimes the hoods are very large and showy (as in showy milkweed), or they may be quite inconspicuous. There are about 140 species of milkweed, 12 of which are in Wyoming.



## Pallid Milkweed, *A. cryptoceras*

Short plants (<4"), with leaves more or less oval in shape, and silvery blue-green. Flowers with white petals and purple hoods, in loose umbels. Found on desert hills of southwestern Wyoming (Uinta, Lincoln, Sweetwater and Carbon counties).



## Swamp Milkweed, *A. incarnata*



Plants tall (up to 4 ft) with elliptical leaves up to 6 x 1 1/2", and rosy pink to magenta flowers, 1/4 to 1/2 inch across. Grows in wet, marshy areas in far eastern and southeastern Wyoming and Big Horn County. This species is available through nurseries, so it can also be found in gardens.

## Showy Milkweed, *A. speciosa*

Plants 2-3 ft tall, with large, oval leaves up to 7 inches long, and large, pale pink flowers. The hoods are greatly elongated (up to 1/2"), and are the dominant feature of the flower. This is the most common milkweed in Wyoming and the most widespread, often found along streams as well as roadsides and other disturbed sites.



## Green Comet Milkweed, *A. viridiflora*



Plants 1-3 ft tall; leaves variable in size and shape, from long and narrow to more oval with a pointed tip. Flowers in dense umbels, greenish to purple, with corolla completely reflexed and hoods reduced and not at all showy. Plains, hills and roadsides across the eastern half of Wyoming and the Big Horn Basin.

## Oval-leaved Milkweed, *A. ovalifolia*

Plants 10-24" tall, with ovate leaves that are distinctly lighter on the underside. White flowers may be tinged with purple, and fade to pale yellow. Found in woods and stream banks of Campbell and Crook counties.



## Plains Milkweed, *A. pumila*



Short plants (<12"), with very narrow leaves (<1/8") that are densely, spirally arranged. Flowers are small and white. Found in the plains and hills of the eastern third of Wyoming.

## Narrow-leaved Milkweed, *A. stenophylla*



Plants 1-2 ft tall, leaves long and very narrow, widely spaced along the stems. Flowers relatively small, greenish-white with flaring petals, in small clusters along the length of the stem. In Wyoming, found only in Crook and Weston counties.

# Rare Milkweeds in Wyoming:

**Sand Milkweed,**  
*A. arenaria*



Plants 8-20" tall, with hairy stems and ovate to nearly rectangular leaves. Flowers are fairly large, pale green to creamy. In Wyoming, known only from the sandhills of eastern Goshen County.

**Engelmann's Milkweed,**  
*A. engelmanniana*



Plants 2-4 ft tall, leaves long and narrow, sparsely spaced on the stem. Flowers pale green, sometimes flushed with purple, the horns scarcely visible or concealed within the hoods. In Wyoming, known only from the sandhills of eastern Goshen County.

**Hall's Milkweed,**  
*A. hallii*



image courtesy of Colorado Natural Heritage Program

Plants 8-18" tall, with relatively large flowers with widely spreading hoods. Leaves lanceolate, with pointed or rounded tips. In Wyoming, known only from the Laramie Basin in Albany County, last seen in 1958.

**Horsetail Milkweed,**  
*A. subverticillata*



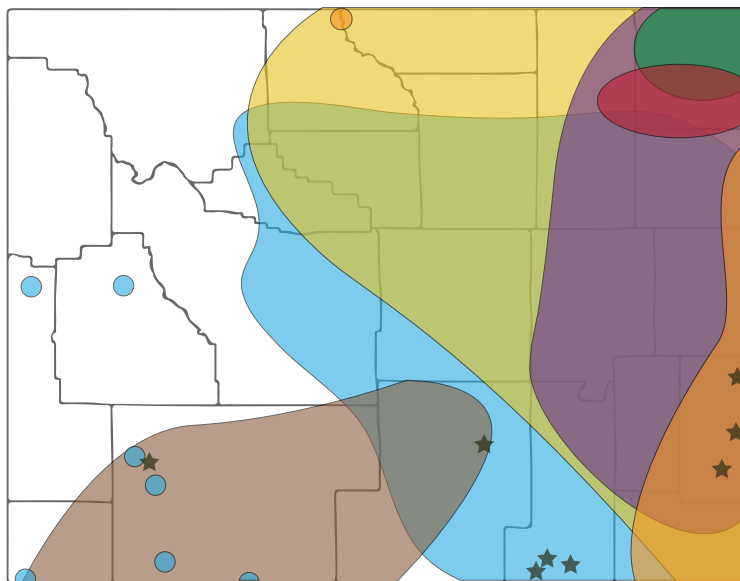
Plants 1- 3 ft tall, with very narrow leaves attached to the stem in whorls. Flowers white or greenish, with flaring petals and hoods and long horns. In Wyoming, known only from Carbon County, last seen in 1947.

**Wheel Milkweed,**  
*A. uncialis*



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Short plants (4"), with stems in clusters and lanceolate leaves less than 1 ½" long and wavy margins. Flowers purple to pink. Collected only once, probably in Sweetwater County, in 1873.



- Green Comet Milkweed
- Narrow-Leaved Milkweed
- Oval-Leaved Milkweed
- Pallid Milkweed
- Plains Milkweed
- Showy Milkweed
- Swamp Milkweed
- ★ Rare Species

