

Pod Collection Tips

- Become familiar with the common milkweed to avoid harvesting pods from similar plants such as hemp dogbane and swamp milkweed. See pictures and descriptions in this brochure.
- Locate common milkweed stands for seed pod collection beside roadways, in pastures, meadows, along railroad tracks, bike paths, highway medians, agricultural field margins, vacant land, cultivated gardens, and parks. Establish ownership and arrange for the owner to conserve the stand until the seed pods are ripe and ready to harvest.
- Do not harvest seed pods before they are ripe. Seeds develop best when left to ripen on the stem.
- Periodically check the progress of the pod. Common milkweed pods will go from a soft green to a gold/yellow or gray to brown. When the pods appear ready, test the seams. If they easily pop open with gentle pressure, they are ready.
- Do not collect pods that are already open as they may have been infested by the giant milkweed beetle. These orange/black beetles can damage the seed making it non-viable. (see photo in this brochure)

- Milkweed beetles will not eat their way into the pods but will wait for the pod to open. To prevent their entry use a small rubber band, lightly wrapped around the pod but not crushing it. Bags of cheesecloth or organza can also be used to surround the pods until they are ripe.
- Once harvested, keep pods in paper grocery bags to avoid the development of mildew or mold. Never store in plastic. The pods need to be completely dried before they are stratified in cold storage for germination.
- When collecting, please note the date and county of collection on the paper sack, then bring them to your local Soil and Water Conservation District office between September 1 and October 30.



Contact your local
Soil and Water
Conservation District
for more information

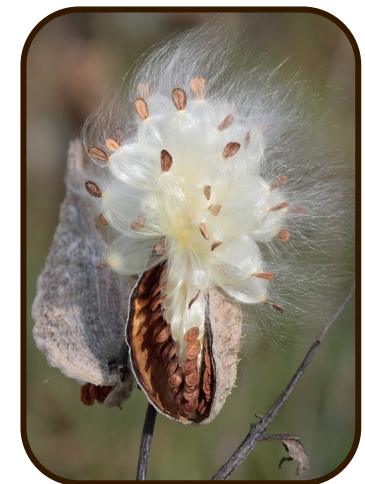


The Common Milkweed Seed Pod

Collection Project:

It's important ...

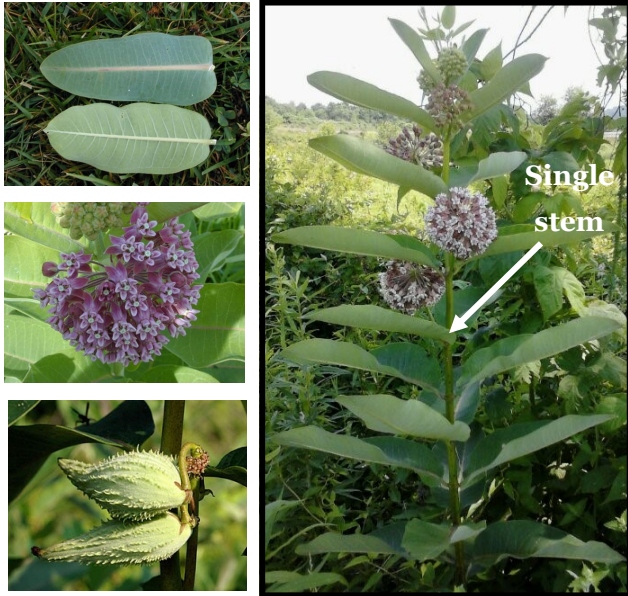
*... but “What should I be
Collecting?”*



*and, “How do I
Collect Them?”*

So What's the Difference?

Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)



Location: Common Milkweed is a perennial that grows from deep rhizomes in sandy or rocky soils along roadways, open fields, prairies, forest margins and waste areas.

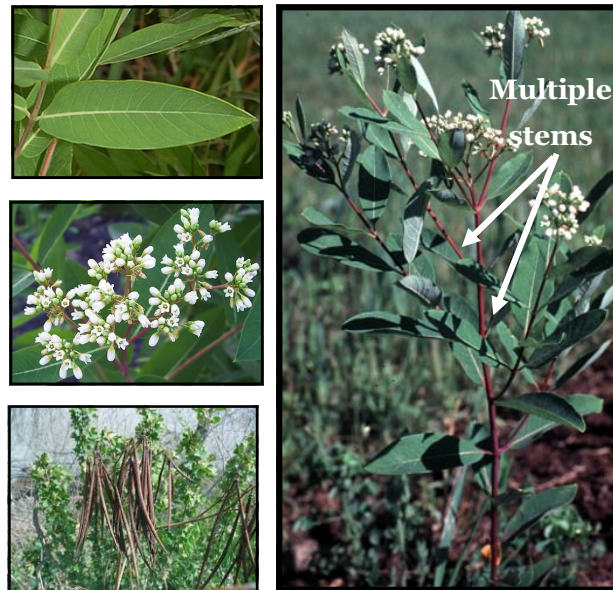
Stem: The plant generally has stout single stems growing from a thick base at the ground. Stems are hairy and can grow to 6.5 ft. tall.

Leaf: The leaves grow opposite of each other on the stem and are broadly ovate to elliptical blades on short petioles. They have sparse hair on top and plenty of hair on the bottom, 3-7" long. (see pictures above)

Flowers: Round, umbel flower clusters appear on their own stems in the upper leaf axils and there are 20-30 small pink/white flowers per cluster. They bloom May to August.

Seed Pods: Plump tear-shaped pods have a warty surface and are gold/gray to brown when ripe.

Hemp Dogbane/ Indian Hemp (*Apocynum cannabinum*)



Location: Hemp Dogbane is a perennial that grows in moist places along roadways, streams, riparian areas, and waste places.

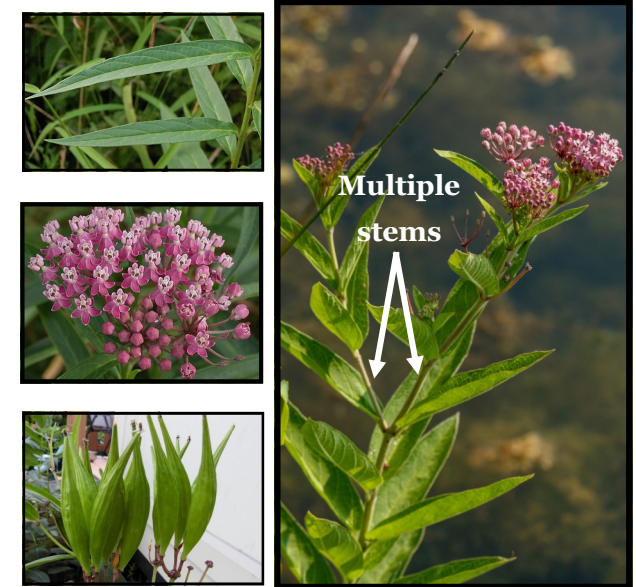
Stem: The plant generally has a stout single reddish stem growing from the base but branches in multiple stems towards the top of the plant. The plant can grow to 6 ft. tall.

Leaf: The leaves grow opposite of each other on the stem and are elliptical pointed blades on short petioles with white hairs beneath. They are about 2-3" long. (see pictures above)

Flowers: Flower clusters appear on leafed stems occurring in upper branches. They are small inconspicuous green/white/pink blooms in small open clusters. They bloom July to August.

Seed Pods: Long pendant pods hold the seeds and are a rusty brown when ripe.

Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnate*)



Location: Swamp Milkweed is a perennial that prefers moist soils near bodies of water. It likes wet meadows, floodplains, or wet open woods. It can also grow in prairies, open fields and roadsides. Unlike many milkweeds, it will tolerate heavy clay and slightly acidic soils.

Stem: The plant generally has a stout single reddish stem growing from the base but branches in multiple stems towards the top of the plant. The plant can grow to 6 ft. tall.

Leaf: It has long, narrow, lance-shaped leaves that grow in pairs up the stem. (see pictures above)

Flowers: Bright pink, white and purple flowers in soft open clusters appear at the top of stems. They bloom July to September.

Seed Pods: Soft, narrow tear-shaped seed pods will turn brown when ripe.