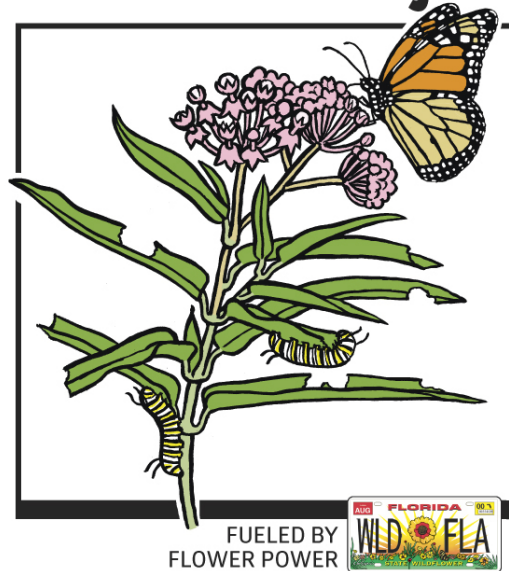


The Florida Milkweed Project



Concern for the imperiled Monarch Butterfly and pollinators in general is driving increased demand for Milkweed plants (*Asclepias* species). Due to limited supply of native Milkweed, the horticulture industry and gardeners are currently relying mostly on non-native sources, including Tropical Milkweed, *A. curassavica* – which causes concern for Monarch health, as does the use of pesticides. Florida is home to 21 native *Asclepias* species and some growers are experimenting with organic & low-toxin production.

The Florida Wildflower Foundation, University of Florida and FANN want to expand the availability of healthy native ecotype Milkweed and help gardeners and landscapers use more appropriate, sustainable species in our urban landscapes. Research is needed to identify and develop best practices for propagation and use of these plants. Overall project goals include:

- 1) Collect and distribute native ecotype seed for use by industry professionals and gardeners.
- 2) Provide gardeners and industry professionals with information on seed collection, storage and propagation.
- 3) Provide best practices information related to growing healthy, safe and sustainable crops of native milkweed in a production nursery environment.
- 4) Educate gardeners and landscape professionals on the selection, use, cultivation and maintenance of native ecotype milkweed plants.

Phase 1 of the Florida Milkweed Project, funded by the Florida Wildflower Foundation and the University of Florida, focuses on the collection and distribution of native ecotype seed from the most immediately useful species for garden and landscape: Pink Milkweed, *Asclepias incarnata*, White Milkweed, *A. perennis*, and Butterfly Milkweed, *A. tuberosa*. Seed collectors will follow ethical seed collection practices developed in consultation with the Florida Native Plant Society, including proper permitting and documentation of the source plants. Seed will be distributed to growers and gardeners by our partner, the Florida Wildflower Seed & Plant Growers Association.

TIMEFRAME: July 2015 – MARCH 2016 for Phase 1

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