

common milkweed *Asclepias syriaca*

Kingdom: Plantae

Division/Phylum: Magnoliophyta

Class: Magnoliopsida

Order: Gentianales

Family: Asclepiadaceae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

Common milkweed is a perennial herb. The stems of this species are upright, unbranched and hairy. Its leaves are arranged opposite each other on the stem. Each oblong-to-oval leaf is simple and leathery. A leaf may be as much as four inches wide. The leaves and stems exude a milky sap when broken. The unique hourglass-shaped rose, lavender or purple-brown flowers are arranged in domed, umbrellalike clusters. Flower clusters develop in the leaf axils. The fruit is a long, pointed seedpod that has a warty, outer covering and contains several seeds. Each seed is attached to silky hairs. The plant may grow three to five feet tall.

BEHAVIORS

Common milkweed may be found throughout Illinois. It grows in prairies, fields and roadsides. Flowers are produced from May through August.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; edge; sand prairie

© Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 2016. Biodiversity of Illinois.