

Orange Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)

Asclepias tuberosa, the butterfly weed, is a species of milkweed native to eastern and southwestern North America. It is commonly known as butterfly weed because of the butterflies that are attracted to the plant by its color and its copious production of nectar. It is a perennial plant growing to 1-3 feet tall, with clustered orange or yellow flowers from early summer to early autumn. The leaves are spirally arranged, lanceolate, 2-5 inches long, and about 1 inch wide.



It is also a larval food plant of the queen and monarch butterflies, as well as various moths, including dogbane tiger, milkweed tussock, and others. Hummingbirds, bees and other insects are also attracted. It is not a preferred host plant of the monarch butterfly but caterpillars can be reared on it successfully. Some wild plants have been reported to have orange flowers that are very reddish. It is uncertain if this is due to soil mineral content, ecotype genetic differentiation, or both. A cultivar, "Hello Yellow", typically has more yellowish flowers than ordinary examples of this plant.

Plant Care: Butterfly weed is easy to grow in full sun. New growth tends to emerge late in the spring. Plants are easily grown from seed. It does not transplant well due to its deep taproot and is probably best left undisturbed once established.

Watering: Butterfly weed is drought tolerant—does well in poor, dry soils.

References:

<https://www.wildflower.org>

Peterson, Roger Tory; Margaret McKenny (1968). *A Field Guide to Wildflowers of Northeastern and North-central North America*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. ISBN 978-0-395-18325-0.