



# Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

## *Asclepias tuberosa*

Educating people about the environmental necessity, economic value, and natural beauty of native plants

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[www.wildflower.org](http://www.wildflower.org)

### Common name

Butterfly weed

### Range

Found throughout Texas, especially in the northern two-thirds of the state. There are 120 species of *Asclepias* native to North America, with the range of *A. tuberosa* covering most of the eastern half of the United States.

### Life cycle

Perennial

### Bloom period

April-September

### Soil preference

Various soils in prairies, fields, open woods, thickets, and on hillsides.

### Exposure

Sun - light shade

### Propagation

The easiest method of propagation is root cuttings. In the fall, cut the taproot into 2-inch sections and plant each section vertically, keeping the area moist.

Seeds are commonly available for fall planting. Do not expect flowering until the second or third year. Once established, it will persist for many years, providing months of color.

### Seeding rate

It is not economically feasible to plant *A. tuberosa* on a large scale, but still it is an excellent choice for small-scale plantings. The recommended seeding rate is 384 ounces/acre. The approximate cost is \$24/ounce. The seed count is 6,400 seeds/ounce. Nursery-propagated plants also are available.



### Maintenance

It takes 2 - 3 years before *A. tuberosa* produces its vibrant flowers, which appear in 2 - 3 inch clusters of orange-red. Once established, it lasts for years, becoming thicker each year.

Allow seeds to completely mature before collecting seed to establish new plants in another location. A long pod is produced containing hundreds of seeds with tufts of long, silky hairs (an adaptation for wind dispersal).

### Miscellaneous

*A. tuberosa* is an important food for the Monarch and other butterflies. Its root contains compounds that act as a mild bronchiodialator and expectorant, increasing perspiration and lymphatic drainage. Butterfly weed also makes a delightful cut flower.