East Bay Nursery

Showy Milkweed

Asclepias speciosa



Showy Milkweed fruit
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Plant Height: 3 feet

Flower Height: 4 feet

Spread: 32 inches

Sunlight:

Hardiness Zone: 4a

Other Names: Butterfly Flower, Silkweed

Description:

This variety produces showy round clusters of sweet-scented shell pink flowers and is the mandatory food source for the caterpillars of the Monarch butterfly who feast on the leaves; best in well drained soil and spreads quickly by rhizomes and seeds

Ornamental Features

Showy Milkweed features showy balls of shell pink star-shaped flowers with white overtones at the ends of the stems in mid summer. The flowers are excellent for cutting. Its narrow leaves remain grayish green in color with pointy gold spines throughout the season.

Landscape Attributes

Showy Milkweed is an herbaceous perennial with an upright spreading habit of growth. Its medium texture blends into the garden, but can always be balanced by a couple of finer or coarser plants for an effective composition.

This is a relatively low maintenance plant, and is best cleaned up in early spring before it resumes active growth for the season. It is a good choice for attracting butterflies to your yard, but is not particularly attractive to deer who tend to leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Suckering
- Self-Seeding

Showy Milkweed is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Showy Milkweed will grow to be about 3 feet tall at maturity extending to 4 feet tall with the flowers, with a spread of 32 inches. It tends to be leggy, with a typical clearance of 1 foot from the ground, and should be underplanted with lower-growing perennials. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 10 years. As an herbaceous perennial, this plant will usually die back to the crown each winter, and will regrow from the base each spring. Be careful not to disturb the crown in late winter when it may not be readily seen!

This plant should only be grown in full sunlight. It is quite adaptable, prefering to grow in average to wet conditions, and will even tolerate some standing water. It is not particular as to soil type or pH. It is quite intolerant of urban pollution, therefore inner city or urban streetside plantings are best avoided. This species is native to parts of North America. It can be propagated by division.

Showy Milkweed is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. With its upright habit of growth, it is best suited for use as a 'thriller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the center of the pot, surrounded by smaller plants and those that spill over the edges. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.