

July 2015 Plant of the Month



Asclepias purpureascens L., Purple Milkweed

July's *Plant of the Month* is a widespread milkweed known to many of our Northern followers. Purple milkweed receives the name "purple" due to its vibrant colored corolla, a hue more akin to fuchsia than purple. The plant is erect, usually less than one meter. The leaves are ovate-oblong with a distinct red petiole and center vein. Flowers appear in late June and persist for about one week. The plant exists on rich upland soils, especially along openings found under power lines, road cuts, and old fields.

Asclepias purpureascens is a frequent member of the flora north of the Coastal Plain. It grows on uplands in the Piedmont, Highlands, and Valley & Ridge provinces. It is an infrequent flora member on the Coastal Plain, specifically in the Delaware Valley, Delaware Bay Shore and Cape May. It is wholly missing from the central Pine Barrens. Hough (1983) cites recent collections for the species on the north of the Fall Line with older collections in Monmouth, Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, Salem, and Atlantic counties. Stone (1910) found the species common in the Northern New Jersey counties but rare on the Coastal Plain, with a few collections in the New Egypt, Camden and Clarksboro areas. These early 20th Century observations continue their validity to the present. Few recent observations include this species indicating its rarity on the Coastal Plain.

JRA, 6/2015