



Emerald Goddess Gardens

emeraldgoddessgardens.com

Botanical Name	Calotropis gigantea
Common Name	Giant Milkweed, Swallow-wort, Madar
Mature Size	8 to 10 feet
Bloom Color	Purple, lavender, white, sometimes light green
Bloom Period	Perpetual
Boom Form	Cluster of florets
Water	Drought tolerant once well established
Light	Full sun
USDA Zone	10 to 11
Fragrance	None
Uses	Small character tree, butterfly garden
Special Features	Attracts butterflies, salt tolerant
Grower Notes	Sap and other parts are considered toxic



Calotropis gigantea (formerly *Asclepias*) or Giant Milkweed is native to Asia. It has become naturalized in many other locations, including Western, Central and South America, the Caribbean, Brazil and Australia. It's natural habitat is usually along roadsides, and on previously developed lots and acreage.

The plant is a fast growing, soft wooded, evergreen or semi-deciduous tree-like shrub with soft, large oval shaped gray green leaves with an odd heart shaped base and hairy underside. The trunk is covered with a thick, corky, white to gray, furrowed, gnarly bark and frequently grows at odd twisted angles as if pushed by the wind, or other unseen force.

It will grow in a wide range of soil types, is very drought tolerant once well established and also tolerant of salt spray. Giant Milkweed is frequently found growing wild in dry coastal environments. It is a lowland plant that does not typically grow at elevations above about 1000 feet.

The Giant Milkweed produces clusters of waxy, five petaled flowers in multi-toned purples, lavender and white. The flowers are frequently used for tassels and leis. The flowers attracts several species of butterflies, such as Tiger Butterflies (*Danaus chrysippus*), Monarchs (*Danaus plexippus*), and others. Monarchs are believed to have the ability to utilize compounds from the flowers as a defense. A fibrous non edible fruit like seed pod follows the flower.

Direct planting of 4 inch starter size plants is not recommended, so for the best results with your new plant, we recommend it be re-potted and allowed to grow larger before setting out in the landscape within the recommended USDA Zone range.

- Plant early in the season after the danger of frost and freeze has passed.
- Plant in fertile, very well draining soil.
- Locate in full sun
- Select one or a few strong sturdy branches for the central trunk. Keep sucker growth pruned away from the lower 1/3 of the central trunk(s).
- Prune developing canopy lightly and often to develop interior strength and reduce breakage.
- Feed a good quality slow release fertilize with the initial planting and yearly thereafter.
- Protect from frost and freeze.

For quick answers to your growing or planting questions, just email us at service@emeraldgoddessgardens.com

If you don't know your USDA Planting Zone, you can check the map on our website site at emeraldgoddessgardens.com

This plant is intended for use as an ornamental, decorative item only. Plants contain compounds that are scientifically validated as biologically active, and should therefore be considered toxic. Emerald Goddess Gardens does not recommended nor endorse the use of ornamental plants for homeopathic treatments, herbal remedies, spiritual experience enhancement, or recreation.

Photo credit:Creative Commons

Care of Your New Plant Butterfly Garden Plant

Here are a few basic guidelines for handling and caring for your new plant:

Please note that we are a fully licensed and certified commercial mail order nursery, and as such are required by law to treat all plants immediately prior to shipping to assure that we do not inadvertently transfer pests or disease into other states. Generally, we use short acting products such as Neem Oil that will protect the plant for 7 to 14 days at most, and can be washed away with soap and water. However, we recommend that all serious butterfly enthusiasts quarantine all plants from any source for a 30 day period before introducing them into the habitat.

Direct planting of 4 inch starter size plants or plugs directly into the landscape is not recommended, with a few exceptions. So, for the best results with your new plant we suggest that it be repotted into a larger pot and allowed to grow larger until the new pot is filled with roots before setting out.

Check the recommended USDA Zone Range for the plant. Many gardeners are able to successfully grow plants outside their recommended Zones, but this is dependent upon providing the type of environment and care the plant needs.

- Immediately repot the new plant into a 6 inch to 10 inch diameter pot (a 6 inch pot is the recommended size for starter plugs) that can drain easily and thoroughly.
- Use a good quality commercial potting media.
- Apply a high quality, slow release plant food according to the label directions. Do not use hot, all chemical fertilizers like 6-6-6 or 10-10-10.
- Locate so that the plant can receive direct, full spectrum light for several hours daily, but is protected from hot, direct afternoon sun.
- Maintain consistent and uniform moisture in the soil. Take care not to over water.
- Packing crystals may be reused to conserve water, but do so with caution as they hold 6000 times their weight in water.
- If reusing the crystals, mix and incorporate them thoroughly throughout the potting media.
- Be sure the pot can drain and that the bottom of the pot does not sit submerged in water for more than a few hours.
- Supplement feed with a water soluble plant food every 2-3 weeks according to the label directions.
- Prune or pinch lightly and often when the plant is young and actively growing to strengthen the central stalk and encourage branching and build uniform shape.
- Monitor for signs of disease or insects and treat accordingly.
- Protect from frost and freeze, as even cold tolerant plants can be damaged by cold, and tropicals will perform better, flower earlier, and live longer within their Zone Range when protected from cold temperatures.

Many tropical and subtropical plants can be grown as potted plants indefinitely, and can be successfully wintered over indoors in colder climates, so long as they are moved indoors well ahead of temps into the 30°F's, are maintained in warm environment (minimum 40°F) with adequate, full spectrum light, consistent soil moisture is maintained, and any pest or disease issue are promptly and properly addressed.

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Ornamental Plants sold by Emerald Goddess Gardens are intended for use as ornamental decorative items only. Emerald Goddess Gardens does not recommend or endorse any other use.