

butterfly-weed *Asclepias tuberosa*

Kingdom: Plantae

Division/Phylum: Magnoliophyta

Class: Magnoliopsida

Order: Gentianales

Family: Asclepiadaceae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

Butterfly-weed is a perennial herb. Unlike most milkweeds, the stems of this species are not milky when broken, and the leaves are arranged alternately, instead of opposite each other, along the stem. The hairy stems may or may not be branched. Stems grow to three feet tall. The simple, lance-shaped leaves are smooth along the edges and may be one inch wide. The yellow-to-orange flowers are produced in umbrellalike clusters at the stem tip. The five petals and five sepals point downward away from the central column of the flower, while supporting a crown of the remaining flower parts. The fruit is a spindle-shaped pod (four to five inches in length) containing seeds that have silky hairs attached at one end.

BEHAVIORS

Butterfly-weed may be found throughout Illinois. It grows in woods, fields and dry-to-moist prairies. Flowers are produced from May through September. The plant attracts many insects.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

coniferous forests; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; edge; sand prairie

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