

Comparative Seed Manual: ASCLEPIADACEAE

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This seed manual consists of photos and relevant information on plant species housed in the Integrative Subsistence Laboratory at the Anthropology Department, University of California, Santa Barbara. The impetus for the creation of this manual was to enable UCSB graduate students to have access to comparative materials when making in-field identifications. Most of the plant species included in the manual come from New World locales with an emphasis on Eastern North America, California, Mexico, Central America, and the South American Andes.

Published references consulted¹:

1998. Moerman, Daniel E. *Native American ethnobotany*. Vol. 879. Portland, OR: Timber press.

2009. Moerman, Daniel E. *Native American medicinal plants: an ethnobotanical dictionary*. OR: Timber Press.

2010. Moerman, Daniel E. *Native American food plants: an ethnobotanical dictionary*. OR: Timber Press.

Species included herein:

Asclepias spp.

¹ **Disclaimer:** Information on relevant edible and medicinal uses comes from a variety of sources, both published and internet-based; this manual does **NOT** recommend using any plants as food or medicine without first consulting a medical professional.

Asclepias spp.



Family: Asclepiadaceae

Common Names: Milkweed

Habitat and Growth Habit: Varieties of the species can be found in the tropics of Africa and South America. Other species are native to California and the Great Plains of North America.

Human Uses: Natives used varieties of this species to create string, roe, and cloth from the plant fibers. In World War II, this species was useful in producing life vests. Recent uses include creating filling for pillows and comforters, as houseplants, and ornamental. It is important to note that some species are known to be toxic to large grazing animals. Recent studies demonstrate some physiological components related to its toxicity. The scientists isolated resinoids and cardio active glycoside establishing each compound's ability to cause the contraction of smooth muscles in the GI tract.

Sources Consulted:

<https://www.ars.usda.gov/pacific-west-area/logan-ut/poisonous-plant-research/docs/milkweed-asclepias-spp/>, accessed February 8, 2019.

<http://www.xerces.org/milkweed/>, accessed February 8, 2019.

<https://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/xerces-nrcs-california-milkweed-guide.pdf>, accessed February 8, 2019.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780323443296000218?via%3Dihub>, accessed February 8, 2019.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/agricultural-and-biological-sciences/asclepias>, accessed February 8, 2019.