

How To Grow Milkweed From Seed – Guide with Pictures

Germinating Milkweed Seeds is easy if you follow some key steps. Over the years I've germinated hundreds of Milkweed Seeds! My method for germinating milkweed seeds works with pretty much any type of Milkweed ([Asclepias](#)) seed.



How to Germinate Milkweed Seeds – the Key Steps:

In order to germinate a large percentage of Milkweed Seeds, you need to do the following key steps.

- [Winter-sow](#), or [Cold-Moist Stratify](#) the Seeds for ~ 30 days. Alternatively you can direct Sow in the Fall/Autumn. This will break the seeds 'dormancy' allowing it to germinate.
- Plant seeds just under the soil surface
- Keep the seeds moist, but not soaking wet
- Keep the seeds in an area that receives morning sun and afternoon shade (Typically East-Facing wall)



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I have successfully used my process on the species of Milkweed listed below:

- [Common Milkweed](#) (Asclepias Syriaca)
- [Butterfly Weed](#), or Butterfly Milkweed (Asclepias Tuberosa)
- [Swamp Milkweed](#) (Asclepias Incarnata)
- Poke Milkweed (Asclepias exaltata)
- Whorled Milkweed (Asclepias verticillata)
- Spider Milkweed (Asclepias viridis)

Materials

The materials listed below are for those who wish to winter-sow, or start their seeds in pots. If you are direct sowing, skip to the process!

- Container or Pot
- Potting Soil or Seed Starting Mix

- Spray Bottle with water
- Milkweed Seeds*

*We wrote a guide for [harvesting Milkweed Seeds without making a mess](#). You may want to have a look, it is quick, clean, and easy.

Process to Germinate Milkweed Seeds

Note – Milkweed Seeds should be winter-sown or cold stratified for at least 30 days to achieve a high germination rate.

1. **Fill your containers with moist potting soil.** Leave a 1/2" (12 mm) gap to the top of the container.
 - The soil should be moist but not dripping wet. If you take a handful, you should be able to squeeze it and only have a few drops fall out.



2. **Plant your seed.** Place 3-5 seeds on top of the soil in each container or cell. Press the seeds firmly into the soil.
 - Milkweed seeds need good contact with the soil to germinate. However, seeds [will not germinate if planted too deep](#) [2]. Very shallow planting is perfectly fine.



3. **Add more soil.** Sprinkle a dusting of dry potting mix on top of the seeds. I generally plant 1-3 mm deep or less.



4. **Mist the seeds** with your spray bottle. Gently mist the seeds with water, taking care not to dislodge the seeds.



5. **Plant more seed.** Drop a few more seeds on top of the now-moist soil. And again, press them into the soil firmly.

- [Not all seeds are viable.](#)^[3] Through my experience I've learned that adding a few more seeds on top of the soil can help ensure germination.



6. **Mist the seeds.** Gently mist them with your spray bottle again. Then, again gently press your thumb on the cells to ensure good contact with soil.



7. **Place seeds in a location the receives morning sun and afternoon shade.** Typically an East facing wall works best. But, if this isn't available that is ok, just make sure the seeds stay moist and get exposed to sun.

8. Germination should occur a couple of weeks after temperatures reach 65-70F (20C) during the day.

Results

So, below are some pictures of my results from 2020's crop of Milkweed grown from seed! I've been growing various Milkweeds from seed since 2013, and have germinated hundreds of seeds. This method is by far the simplest, and is very effective at producing seedlings.



Common Milkweed



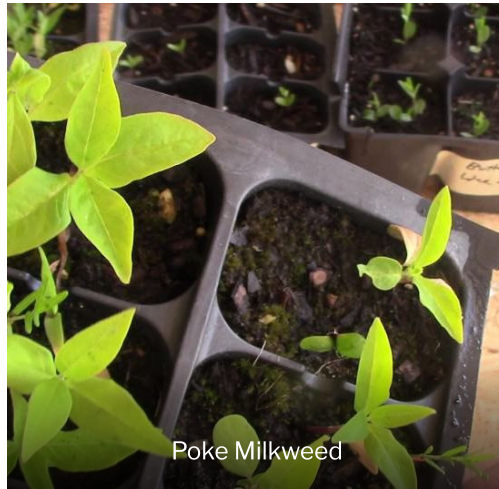
Swamp Milkweed



Butterfly Milkweed



Spider Milkweed



Poke Milkweed



Whorled Milkweed

Purchase Seed

We have ordered a variety of native flower seeds from Everwilde Farms, which you can order right from Amazon through our link on our [RECOMMENDED PRODUCTS PAGE](#). (We may earn a small commission when you purchase through our links, at no cost to you. This helps support our website.)



So, if you would like to read a very successful milkweed seed germination guide with pictures, then read on.....

Cold Treatment of Milkweed Seeds

Ok, so you may have read or heard that some seeds need to go through a winter in order to germinate. The process of going through a winter actually has a name, it is called Cold Moist Stratification. And, that is how mother nature does it!



For Milkweed, [stratification is really important!](#) [1] Milkweed Seeds will benefit from a 30 day period of cold moist stratification, allowing you a much higher germination rate.

In order to achieve that, you need to either [winter-sow](#) the seed (at least by March 1 for most zones) or [simulate the 'winter'](#) by utilizing the refrigerator.

We have written a comprehensive yet easy guide & video to stratify seeds in the refrigerator. Click here to read it ==> <https://growitbuildit.com/seed-stratification-illustrated-guide/>

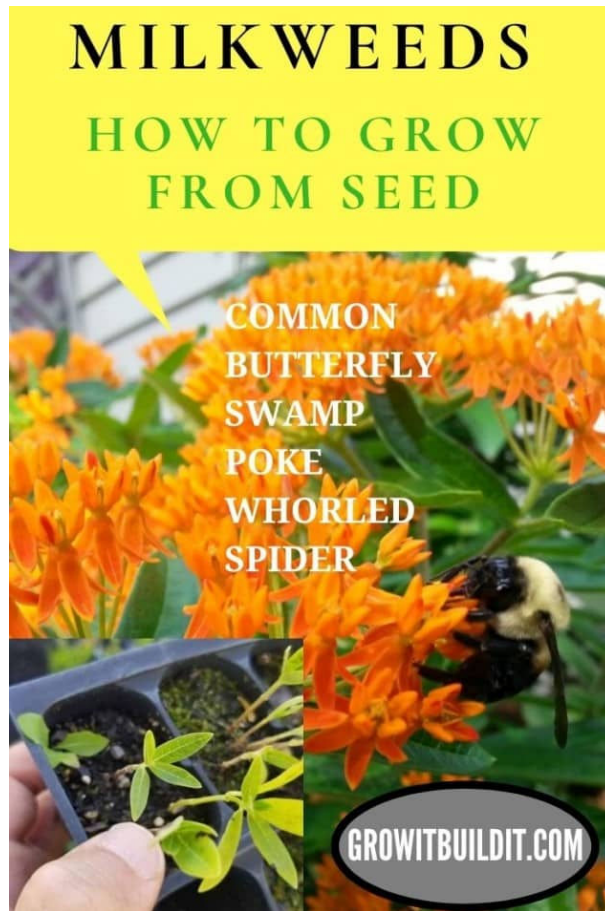
Either winter sowing or stratification in the fridge will work just fine. But you need to decide what is best for you. If you are reading this article during a warm month though, you should be using the fridge!

What do Milkweed Seeds Look Like?

Well, I'm glad you asked! Here is a small gallery of some Milkweed Seeds showing the seed size. Note that all Milkweed seeds are almost paper thin, but a bit brittle too. So handle with care!



PIN IT FOR LATER:



References:

- [1] - [Population, Temperature, and Substrate Influences on Common Milkweed \(*Asclepias syriaca*\) Seed Germination](#). Farmer, Price, and Bell. *Weed Science*, Vol.34, No. 4.
- [2] - [Germination and Development of Honeyvine Milkweed \(*Ampelamus albidus*\) Seed](#). Soteres and Murray. *Weed Science*, Vol. 29, No. 6 (Nov., 1981), pp. 625-628 (4 pages)
- [3] - [Germination of Common Milkweed \(*Asclepias syriaca* L.\) Seeds](#). Jerry M. Baskin and Carol C. Baskin. *Bulletin of the Torrey Botanical Club*. Vol. 104, No. 2 (Apr. - Jun., 1977), pp. 167-170 (4 pages)

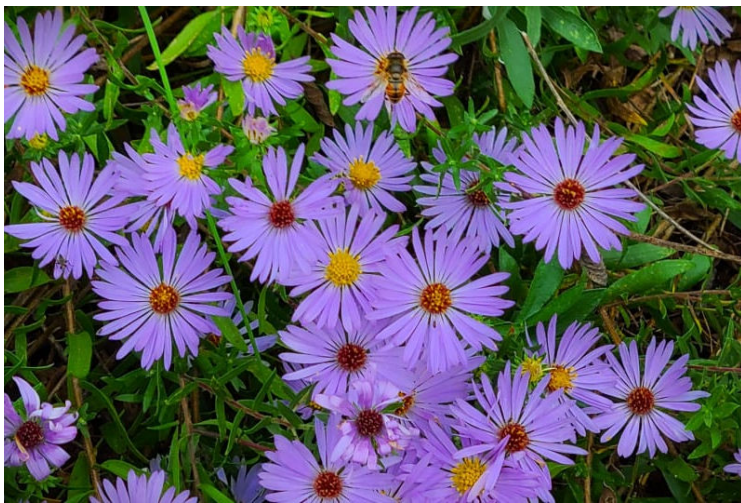




Joe Foster

Hi - I grew up outdoors in nature - hiking, fishing, hunting. In high school I got my first job at a garden center where I learned to garden and landscape. I've been growing plants from seed and designing native plant gardens for over six years. I hope to share some of my knowledge with you! Additionally I am a wood worker / DIY enthusiast. I enjoy designing/building projects (with hand tools when I can!). I hope to give you some tips and useful information!

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