

Butterfly Weed

Asclepias tuberosa

Butterfly weed is a member of the milkweed family and is the preferred food source for the caterpillar of the monarch butterfly. This is one of many small plants that attract butterflies to the landscape. One to several plants is usually all that is needed to draw butterflies to the garden. The plants flower from July to September. The flower colors are orange, red and yellow. The plant will not flower freely until well-established. Butterfly weed is slow to start growth in the spring. The leaves can be stripped by caterpillars and the plant often looks stick-like at certain times of the year. The thin stems and widely spaced leaves of the butterfly weed (Indian paintbrush) give a slightly weedy appearance so most gardeners mix them with shorter plants where the bright red, orange, and yellow flowers can be easily seen above the ground cover.

Type: perennial

USDA hardiness zones: 8 through 10

Uses: naturalizing; cut flowers; attracts butterflies; mass planting; attracts hummingbirds

Origin: native to Florida

Height: 2 to 3 feet **Spread:** 2 to 3 feet

Plant spacing: 18 to 24 inches

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: acidic; sand; loam; clay

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerance: poor

Invasive potential: there are reports that *Asclepias* has a tendency to escape cultivation and may seed into the landscape

Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

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Photo: UF/IFAS