



GREAT RIVER GREENING

RESTORING LAND, WATER AND WONDER

Million Milkweed Seed Collection

25 pods per volunteer x 200 seeds per pod x 200 volunteers = 1 million milkweed seeds!

Join Great River Greening's initiative to collect one million milkweed seeds within the seven county metro area and Anoka Sandplain counties! Common Milkweed is a favorite food plant for colorful monarch caterpillars and your participation will help us plant more of this rich pollinator attractor. Butterflies, like other pollinators, are an important part of food production for humans and wildlife, and for plant reproduction in Minnesota and the world. Unfortunately, pollinator populations in the U.S. have been falling for decades, but you can play a major part in their future.

FAQ

- **What is the Million Milkweed Challenge?** Great River Greening and volunteers will collect milkweed seed, properly care for and store them, and deliver them to Great River Greening. Our goal is to reach one million milkweed seeds to then propagate and plant or spread as seed to create more and stronger habitat for monarchs and other pollinators. (See [Milkweed Collection 101](#) for more information on how to identify, collect, store, and deliver seed)
- **Who can get involved?** Anyone! This challenge is for individuals, families, school groups, church groups, and community groups. Register below if you're interested in joining in!
- **When can seeds be collected?** Seeds are ripe and ready when the pods start to 'pop' or break open. This is generally mid to late September. (See [Milkweed Collection 101](#) for more information)
- **Where can seeds be collected?** Great River Greening is collecting seed from the seven Metro Counties and from within the Anoka Sandplain region (see [Milkweed Collection 101](#) for more information). Great River Greening is not providing any land in 2016 on which volunteers can collect seed. We ask that you collect milkweed seed on your own private property or on property that you have received express permission on which to collect. You must have permission from both private and public landowners before collecting.
- **How do I get involved? How do I learn more?** Register for the challenge through the form below and read Milkweed Seed Collection 101 (link below) prior to collecting seed.

Million Milkweed Seed Collection 101

All you need to know about collecting, cleaning, storing, & delivering



Common Milkweed is a favorite food plant for colorful monarch caterpillars. Help us plant more of this rich pollinator attractor!

Butterflies, like other pollinators, are an important part of food production for humans and wildlife, and for plant reproduction in Minnesota and the world. Unfortunately, pollinator populations in the U.S. have been falling for decades, but you can play a major part in their future.

Thank you for helping us reach a million

25 pods per volunteer, 200 seeds per pod, 200 volunteers!

Our goal is to collect one million milkweed seeds within the seven county metro area. This Challenge is for individuals, families, school groups, church groups and community groups. The seeds will be nursery-propagated and later planted in beneficial areas.

Common Milkweed Identification

- Large, up to 3-4' tall, with distinctive large oval leaves, usually growing in colonies of >3 plants
- Milky sap appears on the leaf when broken off, eaten on the margins, or injured (but common milkweed is not the only plant that has milky sap)
- Has distinctive pear-shaped seed pods in clusters. Note: Less than half the plants are pod-bearing in a typical year.

Collecting Seed

Common milkweed grows particularly well in disturbed areas such as roadsides, pastures, along railroad tracks, bike paths, road medians, agricultural and ball field margins, vacant land, your own yard and garden, and your neighbors'.

You must have permission from public and private landowners. **Do not collect from seeded or planted areas unless you can verify seed origin.**

Great River Greening is not providing any land in 2016 on which volunteers can collect seed. We ask that you collect milkweed seed on your own private property or on property that you have received express permission on which to collect. You must have permission from both private and public landowners before collecting.

Do not collect from seeded or planted areas unless you can verify seed origin. We are collecting and accepting seed from the following locations:

The seven metro area counties

- Anoka
- Carver
- Dakota
- Hennepin
- Ramsey
- Scott
- Washington

and from counties within the Anoka Sandplain region

- Anoka
- Isanti
- Sherburne
- western half of Benton
- western half of Chisago
- southern tip of Mille Lacs
- within Mississippi River valley of and in the western portion of Morrison
- eastern half of Stearns
- the northeastern half of Wright

Leave at least half the seeds on the plant to disperse in the area. You can do this in two ways: Leave half the pods, or leave half the seed in the individual pods. Milkweed seeds need relatively bare soil in order to germinate. If you think the surrounding area is ripe for milkweed propagation, then it is best to collect very lightly (20%) if at all.

Key Collection Details

- Bring a rock. On windy days, your seed bag will fly all over the place unless you have a heavy object in the bottom of the bag. Cleaned seed will fill a small bag, uncleaned seed will fill grocery bags.
- It will help us greatly if you clean it. See more below about why and how.
- Keep seed dry. If you collect the seed when it is wet, spread it out to dry before bagging. The best place for it is in a brown paper bag, which will allow any residual moisture to escape.



- Keep seed from each collection location in its own bag, labeled with: Date of Collection, County of Origin, Collection Location, Your name. (Find forms to download in this packet.)
- The origin of the original seed of a planted or seeded milkweed is typically unknown. This is why we ask for seed from wild plants, not planted or seeded – unless the landowner/gardener does know the County of Origin, record on your data form. It is imperative that we correctly know the county of origin for the seed.
- Do not mix seed from different Locations or Counties.

Time your seed collection, and collect frequently.

Milkweed pods on a single plant will ripen at different times, so you may need to return to it.

As of 8/31/16, some of the local milkweed pods are turning from green to brown spotted, an indication that they are getting closer to bursting at the seam.

Pods vary in size but it is the size and development of the seed that we care about, so if they are good on the inside, please collect them.

The ideal time to collect is when the pods just start to split, revealing ripe seeds but still in a compact cluster. Sometimes pods get split open by an outside force before the seeds are ripe. This will be the case if your seeds are white.

TIP: Wrapping unripe pods with a rubber band will keep them from bursting as they ripen, and you can return when they are ready to pick.

Cleaning

Cleaned seed without the fluffy, white floss is the most valuable as it can be used for plug propagation, is easy to handle, and can be mixed in with mechanical seeders.

Cleaning is time consuming, there is no way around it. And messy.

There are many methods on how to do it, all documented on the web, including shaking it in a bag with quarters and running it through hardware cloth mesh. Do not burn the floss off as that harms a significant portion of the seeds.

You can try separating the seed from the floss as soon as you remove it from the pods by gripping the floss bundle and flicking off the floss with your thumb.

Great River Greening will also have a seed mill available for you to use at our shed in St. Paul.

If you just cannot get around to cleaning, that's ok. We will accept uncleaned seed until our storage capacity is maxed out. This uncleaned seed will be brought out for a volunteer milkweed seed release event in 2017.

Storing

Fold the top of the bag and tape or staple closed, position the label on the outside.

If you use plastic bags, leave the top open and stir the seed every day; this allows some passive drying of the seed.

Once bagged, store in a cool dry place – garage floor, basement floor, outbuilding, or tile floor. Remember that uncleaned seed will fly all over, so think twice before bringing uncleaned seed indoors.

Drop Off Deliveries

We will accept seed drop at our shed (address below)

Wed 10/5 7-11 a.m.

Tue 10/11 7-11 a.m.

Thu 10/13 3:30-6:30 p.m.

We will also accept seed drop off at our Saturday fall events- and we'd love to have you volunteer at one! Look for the drop off location near the registration area.

We will turn these seeds into plants, some as plugs and others sown as part of a mix or hand seeded at volunteer events.

You can also mail in your seeds

- 1) Be sure they are dry before mailing
- 2) Mark the package: For Immediate Open
- 3) Label as described above, including phone or email, in case we have follow up questions.

ADDRESS:

35 West Water Street, suite 201

Saint Paul, MN, 55107

651-665-9500

Milkweed Collection 501

Want more? Contact us if you have access to wild stock of:

- Whorled Milkweed (found in dry areas)
- Rose Milkweed (can be found in road ditches)
- Butterfly weed (can be found in road ditches)

These plants are harder to identify, in smaller numbers, are often planted stock in gardens and natural areas...but just as important.

Questions? Contact our Volunteer Manager kbrom@greatrivergreening.org 651-272-3989

This project is made possible with support from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.