

Identifying Milkweed in Utah



Milkweed species (*Asclepias*) share some defining features that will help you recognize them:



Milky sap



**Umbrella-like
flowering head**



**Reflexed flower
structure**

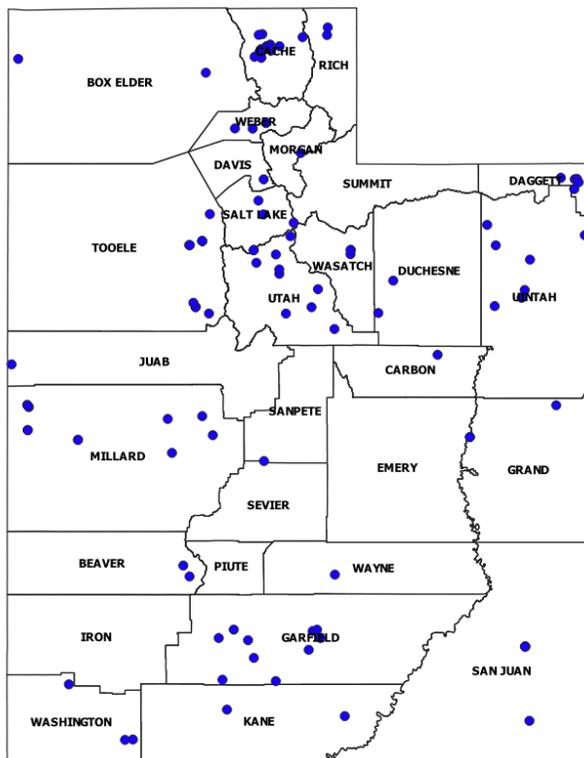


**Pods with wind-
dispersed seeds**

Utah's diverse ecology supports 16 native milkweed species in varying habitat types and elevations. It is helpful to look at **flower color** and shape, **leaf shape** and texture, and **pod shape** to identify species. Also keep in mind **blooming times** for each species.

Showy milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*)

- Very common in meadows, open woodlands, along streams and in more mesic disturbed sites from 5000–8500 ft (1524–2591 m)
- Largest flowered *Asclepias* in North America
- Blooms **May–September**

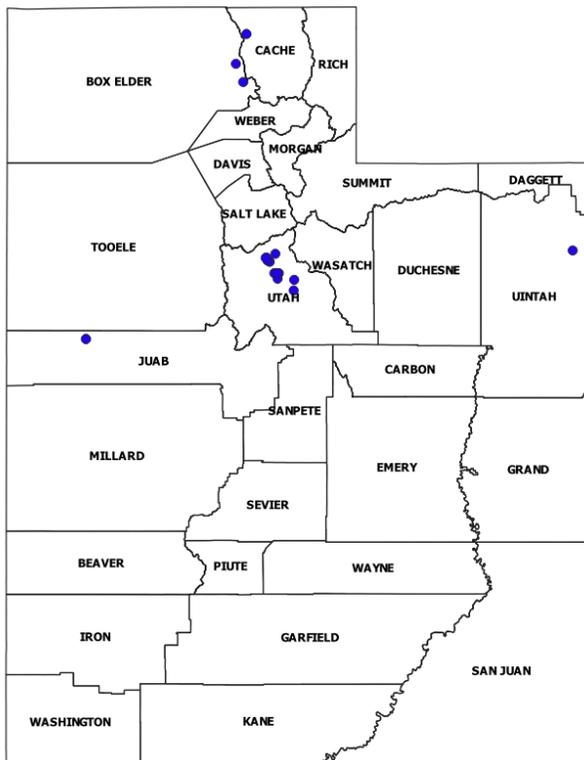


Look for:



Swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)

- Common in riparian or lake shore habitats and wet meadows
- Blooms **July–September**

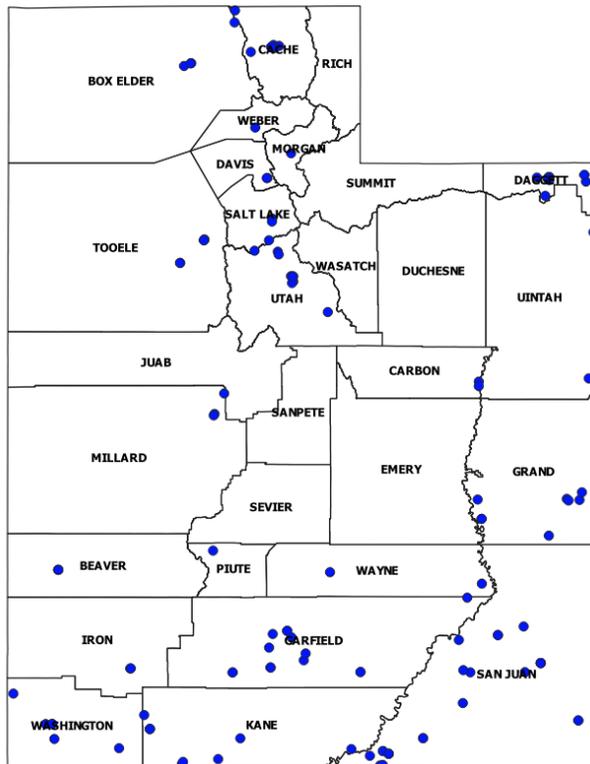


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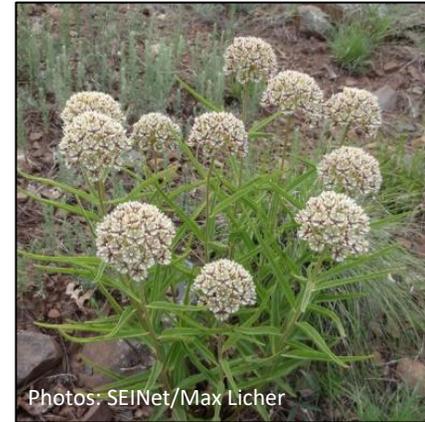


Spider or Antelope horn milkweed (*Asclepias asperula*)

- Common in warm desert shrub, sagebrush, pinyon-juniper mountain brush and ponderosa pine communities
- Throughout Utah, but uncommon in Great Basin and Uinta Basin; often in rocky locations in northern Utah
- Blooms **May–July**



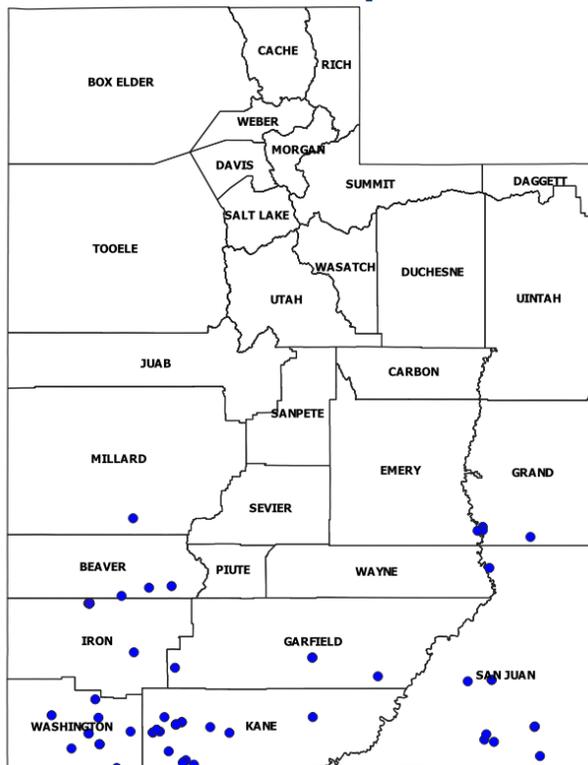
Look for:



Whorled milkweed

(*Asclepias subverticulata*)

- Found in open areas, generally in woodlands, grasslands, to disturbed areas from 3000–8000 ft (914–2438 m)
- Identified by the straight-up, rhizomatous growth form; whorled, linear leaves; and umbels with white, relatively small flowers for milkweed
- Blooms **June–September**



Look for:

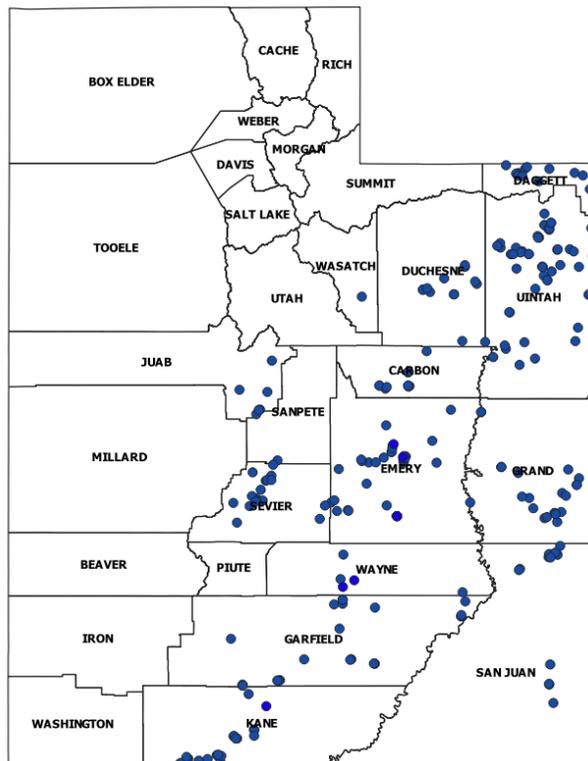


Pallid milkweed

(*Asclepias cryptoceras*)

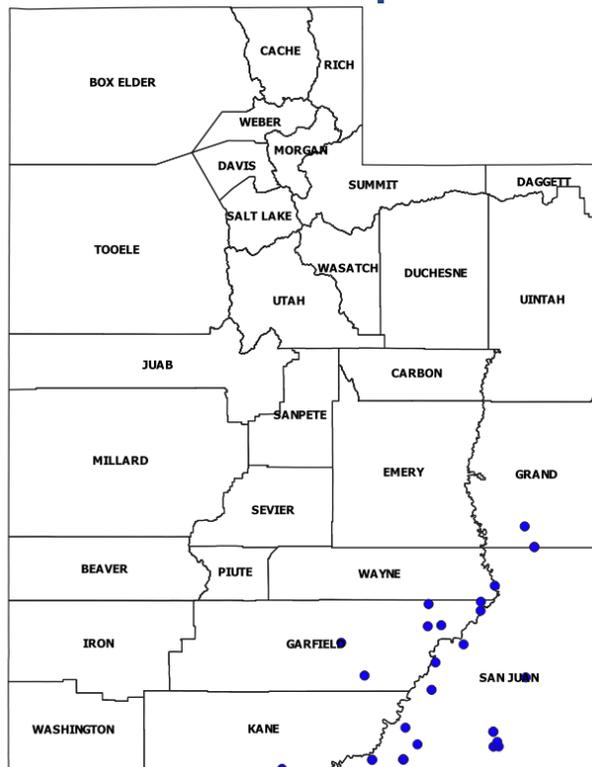
- Found on clay soils in pinyon-juniper, blackbrush, saltbrush, sagebrush communities, from 2000–8000 ft (610–2438 m)
- Blooms **May–July**

Look for:



Broadleaf milkweed (*Asclepias latifolia*)

- Found in disturbed areas of desert shrub, sagebrush, juniper and hanging gardens communities on plains, prairies, mesas, canyons rocky slopes, desert grasslands, and along roadsides, from 2500 – 7000 ft (762–2134 m)
- Blooms **June–September**



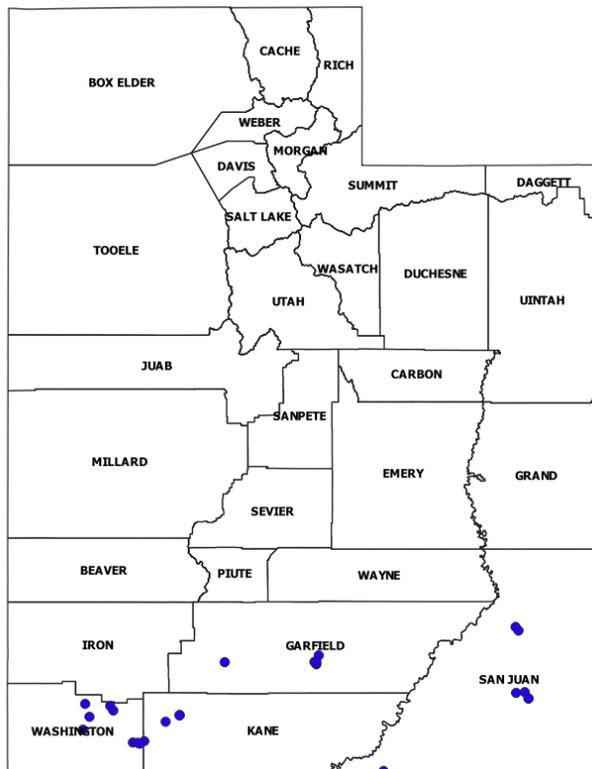
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Look for:



Butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)

- Found in sagebrush, mountain brush and pinyon juniper communities in a variety of habitats from chaparral, pine and riparian woodlands, meadows and disturbed sites from 3000–8000 ft (914–2438 m)
- Blooms **May–September**



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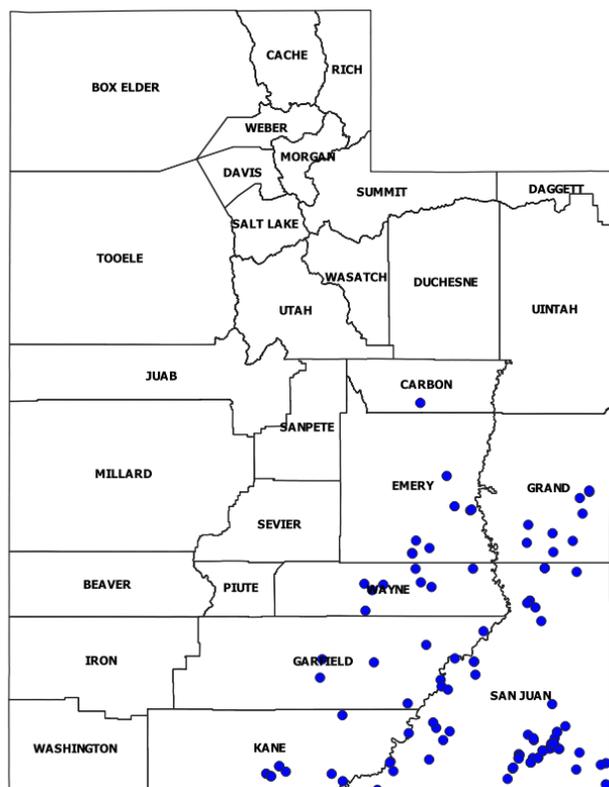
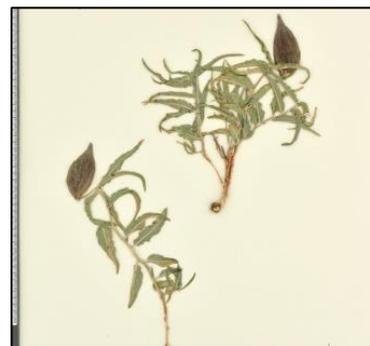
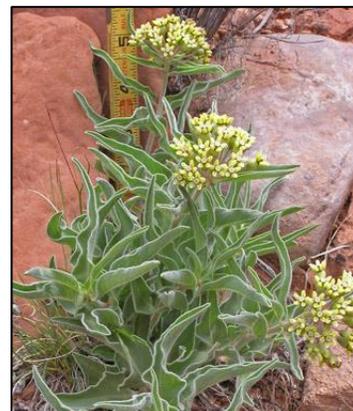
Look for:



Eastwood's milkweed (*Asclepias macrosperma*)

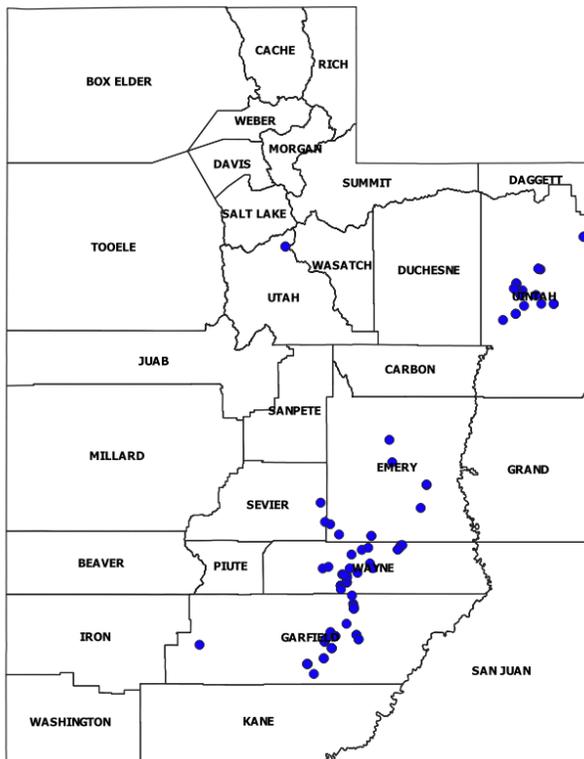
- Sandy sites; mixed desert shrub
- Blooms **April–July**

Look for:

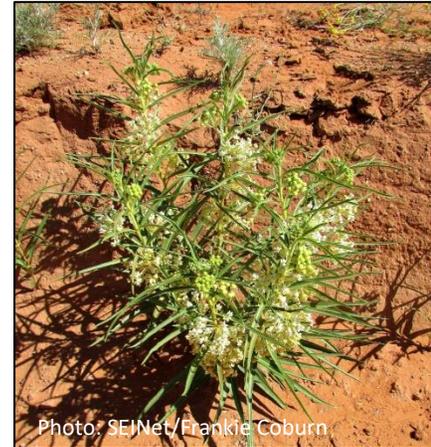


Circle cliffs or Utah milkweed (*Asclepias labriformis*)

- Found in mixed desert shrub and juniper communities in dry sandy soils along washes, canyons and flats with moist subsoil, from 3500–7000 ft (1067–2143 m)
- Blooms **late May–August**



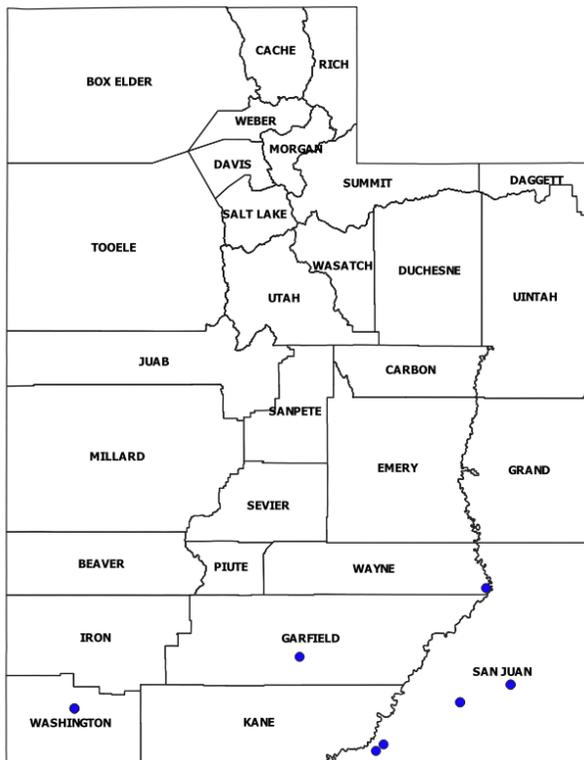
Look for:



Rusby's milkweed

Asclepias rusbyi

- Found in sagebrush, pinyon juniper, Ponderosa pine and mountain brush communities on rocky slopes and in open oak forest, from 3500–7000 ft (1067–2134 m)
- Blooms **June–July**

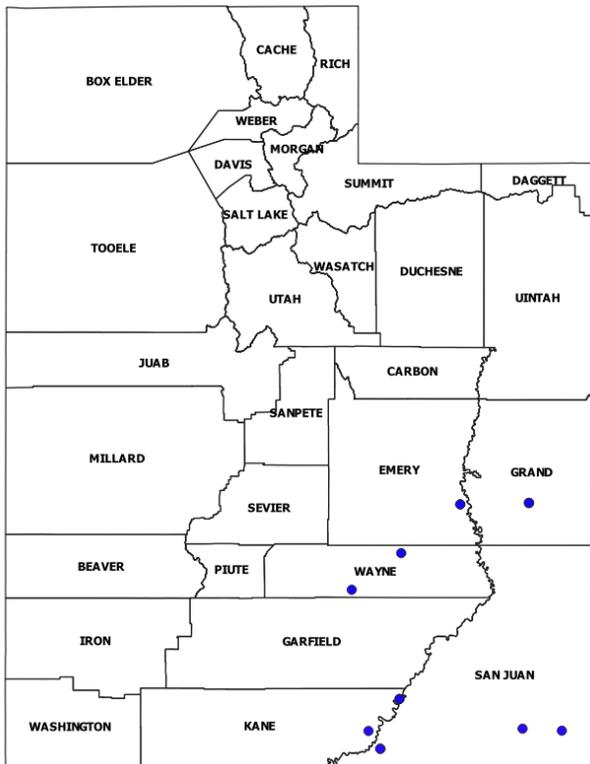


Look for:



Dwarf milkweed (*Asclepias involucrata*)

- Dry flats and washes in AZ and NM, possibly in Southern UT
- Blooms **April – July**



Look for:



Utah's rare *Asclepias* species:



Cutler's milkweed (*A. cutleri*)

Sand dunes in weakly stabilized sand, from 4000–5500 ft (1219–1676 m) in Southeastern Utah.

Blooms **April–June**



Hall's milkweed (*A. hallii*)

Rocky slopes or roadsides in sagebrush steppe, pinyon juniper woodlands, ponderosa pine forests, and mixed conifer forests, from 6,000 – 8,000 ft (1829–2438 m) at scattered locations in Utah.

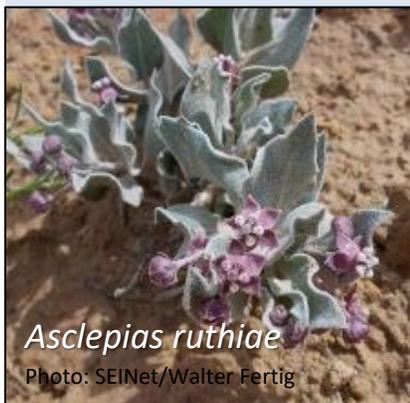
Blooms **June–August**



Desert milkweed (*A. erosa*)

Washes and roadsides in Sonoran and Mohave Desert scrub, especially on sandy plains and hummocks on either side of the lower Colorado River, from 200–5000 ft (61–1524 m) in Washington Co., Utah.

Blooms **May–September**



Ruth's milkweed (*A. ruthiae*)

Sandy washes or clay slopes at the base of steep sandstone cliffs mostly in San Rafael Swell area of Utah.

Blooms **April–June**



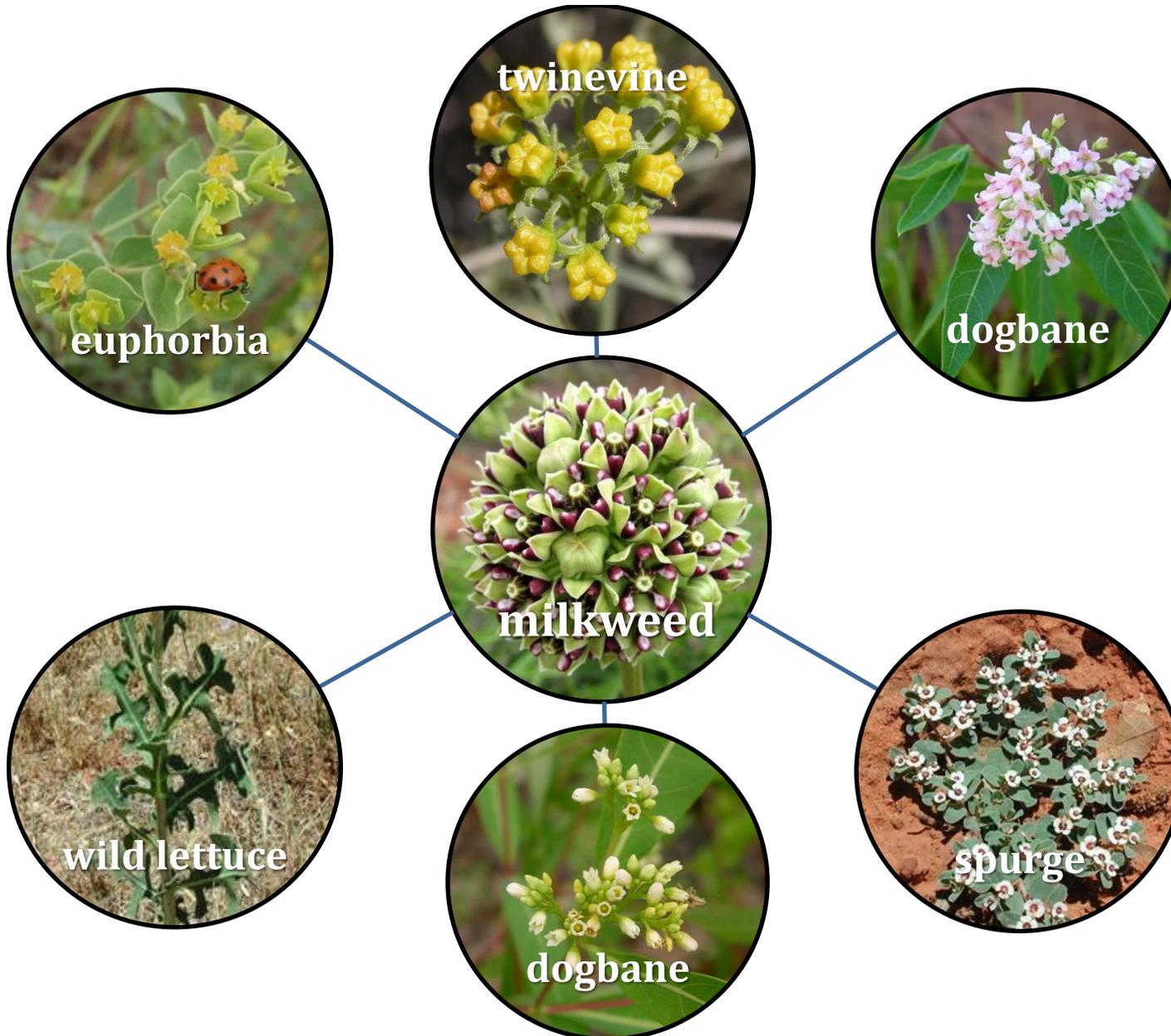
Welsh's milkweed (*A. welshii*)

Sand dunes in sagebrush, pinyon juniper, and oak communities, from 5500– 6500 ft (1676–1981 m) in Southern Utah.

Blooms **May–July**

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Identifying milkweed from look-alikes:



A number of plant species also have milky sap, and similar floral and leaf shapes to true *Asclepias*.

The reflexed flower structure, pod shape, and green stems can often help to distinguish from look-alikes.

When in doubt, take several photos, of the flowers, pods, leaves, and habitat to upload with your Utah Pollinator Pursuit observation. Those little details help a lot!