

a voice
for the natural
landscaping
movement



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Celebrating natives
plant and natural
landscapes
since 1979.

The Grapevine

By Maryann Whitman

Common Milkweed: insulating and edible

The common milkweed, (*Asclepias syriaca*), is one of the best-known wild plants in North America. Children love to play with the downy fluff in autumn, and during World War II schoolchildren collected milkweed floss to fill life preservers for the armed forces. It's used today to stuff jackets, comforters, and pillows – it has an insulating effect surpassing that of goose down. Native Americans employed the tough stalk fibers for making string and rope. Butterfly enthusiasts adore milkweed as the sustenance for their beloved monarch. Hardly any country dweller can fail to notice this unique, elegant plant so laden with fragrant, multi-colored blossoms in midsummer. Now I find, on the Sustainable Future web site that, in the spring, until they are about eight-inches tall, milkweed shoots make a delicious boiled vegetable. Their texture and flavor suggest a cross between green beans and asparagus, but it is distinct from either. If you wash all the bugs off carefully, the cooked young flower heads resemble immature broccoli, and have the same flavor as the shoots. I wonder...if you don't wash all the bugs off will the cooked flower heads taste like chicken?

YouTube

I don't often send friends to YouTube, but here's one that will pull you up short:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuFyqzerHS8.

Guide to the Sedges of the Chicago Region

Put out by the Chicago Field Museum, this is a wonderful and colorful start to learning about the sedges of your area – many of these genera appear throughout the Northeast.

http://fm2.fieldmuseum.org/plantguides/guide_pdfs/CW4_Carex.pdf.

Mistaken Identity?

Invasive Plants and Their Native Look-alikes: an Identification Guide for the Mid-Atlantic, is a full-color, sixty-two-page booklet designed to correct identification of confusingly similar invasive and native plant species. Targeted at land managers, gardeners, conservationists, and all others interested in plants, this booklet covers over twenty invasive species and their native look-alikes.

http://www.nybg.org/files/scientists/rnaczi/Mistaken_Identity_Final.pdf.

Maryann is Editor of the Wild Ones Journal, and comes to the position with an extensive background in environmental matters of all kinds.