



**Common name** • Mead's Milkweed

**Scientific name** • *Asclepias meadii*

**Federal status** • Threatened

**State status** • Endangered



Photo credit: Missouri Dept. of Conservation staff.

## Ecology

Mead's milkweed was once widespread in the tallgrass prairies in the Midwest, including most of Missouri. Today, it can be found on prairie remnants and railroad rights-of-way, in the Osage Plains region, and on igneous glades in the St. Francois Mountains region of the Ozarks. Maturation time from seed may be as long as five to eight years.

Observations show that individual plants produce flowers for two or three years and then rest, and in some cases completely disappear for a few years.

## Reasons for Decline

Populations of Mead's milkweed declined as native prairies were converted for agricultural and urban uses. Current threats include loss of habitat due to urbanization and agricultural land conversion, lack of fire, habitat fragmentation, decreased pollinator visitation in small populations, insect and fungal attacks, mid-summer haying and pesticide application. The low number of individual plants at any one site may not attract potential pollinators, and this may be the cause for low reproductive success.

## Specific Recommendations

Projects being considered in potential Mead's milkweed habitat should include a survey of

the area for remnant native prairies or igneous glades. If present, native prairies and igneous glades should be surveyed for Mead's milkweed during early June.

- Delay haying until after Mead's milkweed has dispersed seeds, i. e. mid-September or later. On grazed sites, use moderate to light stocking rates and grazing practices that include rest periods to allow Mead's milkweed to recover and produce seed.
- Use prescribed burning between late September and April 1 to stimulate sexual reproduction in Mead's milkweed. Conduct some prescribed burns in late September or October to stimulate forbs. Burn management units at least once every five years.
- Be sure that land managers and permittee hayers are not attempting to destroy colonies of the bees that pollinate Mead's milkweed. Colonial bees can harass hayers who sometimes resort to pouring gasoline down holes to kill them. Later haying, as recommended, would lessen the potential for this occurring.
- Avoid use of herbicides unless restricted to spot spraying of target species or apply outside of Mead's milkweed April to mid-September growing season.
- Areas adjacent to existing Mead's milkweed sites should be managed in such a way as to prevent the introduction of non-native species and to avoid herbicide/pesticide runoff.

## Information Contacts

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## Disclaimer

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guidance to those people who wish to voluntarily act to protect wildlife and habitat. Compliance with Best Management Practices is not required by the Missouri wildlife and forestry law nor by any regulation of the Missouri Conservation Commission. Other federal, state or local laws may affect construction practices.