

*Asclepias subulata*  
Rush Milkweed

Reid Park Zoo

**Why Observe?**

Rush milkweed- also commonly referred to as desert milkweed- is native to California, Arizona, and Nevada. Their range also extends into Mexico within the Sonoran Desert. As a drought-tolerant and desert adapted species, rush milkweed can be found along desert washes and other areas that are typically flat. Rush milkweed is a critical source of food and habitat for many species of insects such as butterflies and bees. Two of the most notable species are the monarch butterfly-which were recently added to the Endangered Species list- and the queen butterfly. Both species rely on milkweed as a host plant for their caterpillars and will return to these plants as adults in search of nectar and a safe place to lay their eggs.

**Tips for Identification**

Rush milkweed tends to look like a green sticks when not in bloom. Typically, this species forms clusters of flower buds that are pale yellow/green in color. Once in bloom, their small flowers tend to be pale yellow or white in color.

Be aware there is variation from individual to individual within a species, so your plant may not look exactly like the one pictured. If you are uncertain whether or not a phenophase is occurring, report a “?” for its status until it becomes clear what you are observing after subsequent visits.



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## Image Needed

email  
photos@usanpn.org

### Initial growth

New growth of the plant is visible after a period of no growth (winter or drought), either from above-ground buds with green tips, or new green or white shoots breaking through the soil surface. Growth is considered "initial" on each bud or shoot until the first leaf has fully unfolded. For seedlings, "initial" growth includes the presence of the one or two small, round or elongated leaves (cotyledons) before the first true leaf has unfolded.

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### Young leaves

One or more young leaves are visible on the plant. A leaf is considered "young" before it has reached full size or turned the darker green color or tougher texture of mature leaves on the plant. Do not include fully dried or dead leaves.



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### Leaves

One or more live, fully unfolded leaves are visible on the plant. For seedlings, consider only true leaves and do not count the one or two small, round or elongated leaves (cotyledons) that are found on the stem almost immediately after the seedling germinates. Do not include fully dried or dead leaves.



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### Flowers or flower buds

One or more fresh open or unopened flowers or flower buds are visible on the plant. Include flower buds or inflorescences that are swelling or expanding, but do not include those that are tightly closed and not actively growing (dormant). Also do not include wilted or dried flowers.



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### Open flowers

One or more open, fresh flowers are visible on the plant. Flowers are considered "open" when the reproductive parts (male stamens or female pistils) are visible between or within unfolded or open flower parts (petals, floral tubes or sepals). Do not include wilted or dried flowers.



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### Fruits

One or more fruits are visible on the plant. For *Asclepias subulata*, the fruit is a large and pod-like and changes from green to tan or brown and splits open to expose seeds with fluff. Do not include empty fruits that have already dropped all of their seeds.



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### Ripe fruits

One or more ripe fruits are visible on the plant. For *Asclepias subulata*, a fruit is considered ripe when it has turned tan or brown and has split open to expose seeds with fluff. Do not include empty fruits that have already dropped all of their seeds.

**Phenophases not pictured:** Recent fruit or seed drop