Butterfly Weed
(*Asclepias tuberosa*)
2017 Perennial Plant of the Year

1-3’ rugged clumps, develop multiple strong stems with age. Very hardy and long-lived. Very showy wildflower. CT native, found in sandy field soils, open rocky woods, hillsides.

2-5” flat-domed clusters of small brilliant bright orange flowers, atop stiff thick stalks, June to August. Coral-colored buds. 

2-5” narrow pointed glossy cool-green leaves alternate thickly up the stems. Unlike other milkweeds, no milky sap. Prominent attractive 3-6”-long gray-green pods. They split open when brown and ripe in fall, releasing many white-silky-tailed large brown seeds into the wind.

Full sun, tolerates part sun, dry to medium moisture. Well-drained, sandy, gravelly, or loamy soil, tolerates drought/infertility. Thick tuberous tap roots, extend down to 16”. Easily grown, low maintenance. Never needs dividing. Slow to emerge in spring, so you may want to mark site. Can take 1-2 yrs. before reaching full-size. Mature plants often self-seed (if you wish, remove seed pods before ripening).

Use in meadows, flower gardens, pollinator gardens, and for exceptional cut flowers and decorative seed pods.

Attracts butterflies. As with other Milkweed species, important for Monarchs. Additionally, attracts a wide variety of other butterflies, including Fritillaries, Swallowtails. Larval host for Monarchs, Grey Hairstreaks. Attracts bumblebees, honeybees. Attracts Hummingbirds. Mammals avoid.

Photos 1,7-9: N. Central Conservation District Photo 2: Peter Dziuk, MN Wildflowers minnesotawildflowers.info Photo 3: Will Cook, Carolina Nature; carolinanature.com/butterflies/gsfrit.html Photo 4: North Creek Nurseries; northcreeknurseries.com Photo 5: Photos 5, 8: Ron Thomas, bioimages.vanderbilt.edu/metadata.htm?//tn-herbs/list/tn-herbs# Photo 6: David G. Smith, Delaware Wildflowers; delawarewildflowers.org/images/010624_083640.jpg