**Butterfly Weed**  
*Asclepias curassavica*

**Introduction**
Butterfly weed is a member of the milkweed family native to Florida, and by some reports, the only *Asclepias* that does consistently well in south Florida. The plant can be grown as an annual flower or as a perennial. The plants grow to two- to four-feet-tall and flower from spring until fall. The flower colors are red and orange borne in clusters at the top of the plant. Butterflies can usually be seen flying around the plant and visiting the flowers.

**General Information**
Scientific name: *Asclepias curassavica*  
Pronunciation: ass-KLEE-pee-us kur-uh-SAV-ick-uh  
Common name(s): Butterfly-Weed, Milkweed, Silkweed  
Family: *Asclepiadaceae*  
Plant type: herbaceous; annual  
USDA hardiness zones: 4 through 10  
Planting month for zone 7: Jun; Jul  
Planting month for zone 8: May; Jun; Jul; Aug  
Planting month for zone 9: Mar; Apr; May; Jun; Jul; Aug; Sep  
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: Feb; Mar; Apr; May; Jun; Jul; Aug; Sep; Oct; Nov; Dec  
Origin: not native to North America  
Height: 1 to 2 feet  
Uses: naturalizing; cut flowers; attracts butterflies; mass  
Spread: 1 to 2 feet planting  
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

**Description**
Plant habit: round; upright  
Plant density: moderate  
Growth rate: fast  
Texture: medium

Foliage  
Leaf arrangement: alternate  
Leaf type: simple  
Leaf margin: entire  
Leaf shape: oblong  
Leaf venation: parallel  
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous  
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches  
Leaf color: green  
Fall color: not applicable  
Fall characteristic: not applicable

Flower  
Flower color: red; yellow  
Flower characteristic: summer flowering; spring flowering
Fruit
Fruit shape: unknown
Fruit length: unknown
Fruit cover: unknown
Fruit color: unknown
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches
Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable
Current year stem/twig color: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: thick

Culture
Light requirement: plant grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay
Drought tolerance: high
Soil salt tolerances: poor
Plant spacing: 18 to 24 inches

Other
Roots: not applicable
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more
Invasive potential: may self-seed each year
Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

Use and Management
As plants age and become somewhat woody near the base of the plant, cut them back to stimulate new growth near the bottom. This will help them look good for many years. The best sites have exposure to sun or partial shade and almost any soil. Butterfly weed is slow to start growth in the spring. Mark its location in hardiness zones 8 and parts of 9 before the plant disappears in the winter to prevent damage to easily injured dormant crowns. A deep root (taproot) reportedly makes transplanting difficult. Once established do not disturb butterfly weed unnecessarily. Occasional fertilization can help keep flowers coming nearly all year long. Aphids may infest Butterfly Weed.

Pests and Diseases
Leaf spot diseases are seen but not serious. Rusts cause the formation of reddish colored spots. Cucumber mosaic virus causes leaf mottling but no chemical control is available.