



AGRICULTURE, WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

1682 NOVATO BLVD, SUITE 150-A

NOVATO, CA 94947

415 473 6700 T

415 473 7543 F

www.marincounty.org/ag

Date: August 24, 2022

To: Nursery Owner/Operator

From: Stefan Parnay, Agricultural Commissioner/Director of Weights & Measures

Subject: Prohibited from Sale – Tropical Milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*)

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) recently designated tropical milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*) as a B-rated weed. Under the authority of the Commissioner, tropical milkweed will no longer be allowed to be sold in any nursery or retail center in Marin County.

Tropical milkweed is not native to California, and unlike native milkweed species, it does not die back in winter. This means that organisms harmful to monarch butterflies, such as the protozoan parasite *Ophryocystis elektroscirrha* (OE), can persist on its evergreen leaves. As monarch larvae (caterpillars) eat tropical milkweed leaves they ingest the OE spores and become infected. OE infections have been linked to lower migration success, reduction in body mass, lifespan, mating success, and flight ability. Tropical milkweed can also confuse monarchs into breeding when they should be overwintering. The monarchs have declined by more than 80% since the 1990s from central Mexico, and more than 99% since the 1980s in coastal California, which is due in part to OE.

Please follow the Nursery Best Management Practices for Supporting Monarch Butterflies and Other Pollinators included with this message.

Legal Authority

B-rated weeds are considered to be of limited distribution in California pursuant to California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 3162(f)¹. All nursery stock produced, held, or offered for sale shall be kept free of pests of limited distribution per CCR Section 3060.2².

A plant that is a pest does *not* meet the standards of cleanliness contained in Section 3060.2, and may not be produced, held or offered for sale as nursery stock pursuant to CCR Section 3060.3.

Therefore, please be advised that as of August 24, 2022, tropical milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*) that is being produced, held, or offered for sale as nursery stock in Marin County will be removed from sale, rejected and/or destroyed under the authority of CCR Section 3060.4.

Thank you for your assistance in helping us protect the monarch butterfly. If you have any questions, please contact Assistant Agricultural Commissioner Scott Wise at (415) 473-6700 or marin.dept.ag@marincounty.org.

¹ CCR Section 3162(f) (Title 3, Division 4, Chapter 3, Subchapter 4, Article 2)

² CCR Sections 3060.2 – 3060.4 (Title 3, Division 4, Chapter 3, Subchapter 2, Article 11)