**Asclepius curassavica** L.

(Asclepius nivea var. curassavica)

- **Asclepius curassavica**, also known as Algodoncillo, Bastard Ipecacuanha, Bastard-Ipecac, Blood Flower Milkweed, Coralito, Cottonbush, False Ipecac, Flor De Sangre, Indian Root, Madagascar Cottonbush, Matal, Milky Cottonbush, Ponchilhuits, Red Milkweed, Red-Cotton, Redhead, Redhead Cottonbush, Scarlet Milkweed, Silkweed, Swallowwort, Tropical Milkweed, Wallflower Cottonbush, West Indian Ipecacuana, Wild Ipecac, Wild Oleander, or Yuquillo, has become as popular in the warmer parts of the southern U.S. nursery trade as *A. tuberosa*; this is probably a result of the greater range of flower colors available from darker orange-reds, traditional bright oranges, to lighter oranges and yellows and its adaptation to more subtropical climates; the corona is usually a yellow or orange and lighter than the darker colored corolla; Blood Flower is a herbaceous perennial native to South America eventually reaching 3’ to 4’ (5’) tall with a slightly narrower spread adapted to USDA hardness zones 9(8) to 13; some growers also report this species is easier to grow in container production systems than *A. tuberosa*, but this is debatable; it does tend to grow more quickly than *A. tuberosa* and commence flowering sooner, prompting its occasional use as a summer annual in colder climates; weediness has been reported as a problem on *A. curassavica* in subtropical and tropical regions where it has naturalized outside its native range.

- As with *A. tuberosa*, *A. curassavica* is a plant which takes a couple of years to really get its feet under it and will flower more prolifically and grow more to its full potential a couple of seasons after initial planting where lack of severe cold permits; any sunny to mostly sunny location with well drained soils will be suitable; plants are moderately drought tolerant once the taproot is established; as with many milkweed relatives, butterflies are attracted in droves during flowering; this is probably the plant’s biggest asset, although the flowers are in themselves attractive, however attraction of butterflies is also the source of the taxon’s biggest cultural challenge which is the stripping of the foliage by caterpillars; like it’s kissing cousin *A. tuberosa*, *A. curassavica* is also a magnet for aphids which may require control to keep plants presentable; hummingbirds also frequent the flowers.

- While the greater color range, longer flowering season and quicker flowering are improvements over *A. tuberosa*, the individual flower clusters are not as large and showy and cold tolerance is more limited; if orange flowers to attract butterflies are the object and one is willing to wait and extra year or two for the full effect, *A. tuberosa* may still be the best bet; the specific epithet derives from the Latin words cura for healing and savium for mouth, in reference to former medicinal uses of the plant, but remember as with most members of the Apocynaceae it is reported to be poisonous if ingested.

Copyright 2012 by Michael A. Arnold with all rights reserved; intended for future inclusion in *Landscape Plants For Texas And Environs, Fourth Edition.*