**Scarlet Milkweed Toxic or Not?**
March 15, 2008

**Question:** Is scarlet milkweed poisonous to dogs?  
- Robert R., e-mail

**Answer:** Scarlet milkweed is also known simply as milkweed and is a common sight in butterfly gardens throughout the state. Its botanical name is *Asclepias curassavica*. All parts of the plant are poisonous but not poisonous to all creatures. Milkweed is food for particular aphids, the caterpillars of the monarch butterfly, and the milkweed seed bug. These insects are immune to the toxin but are themselves toxic to other insect predators. In cattle the toxin causes salivation, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, incoordination, and if eaten in large amount, death. It is also toxic to dogs if eaten in sufficient quantity. The sap that exudes from a broken stem or leaves is an irritant to many people.

Stephen Brown is a horticulture agent with the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the horticulture desk at 533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. or by e-mailing brownsh@leegov.com. Visit his web page at http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/hort/GardenHome.shtml, “Garden Doctor” video clips http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/Video.shtml and flowering trees information at http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/GardenPubsA_Z.shtml