

# 20

EASY-TO-GROW

*Wildflowers*



FLORIDA  
Wildflower  
FOUNDATION

## Selection

Select species that are naturally adapted to soil, light and drainage conditions similar to those of your landscape. If your wildflowers don't succeed, try again, maybe with different species. Remember, success depends on using the right plant in the right place.

## Water

Water plants thoroughly when planting, then water as needed until they are established and putting out new foliage. Once plants are established, irrigation should be needed only during extended dry periods. Learn to recognize when plants look wilted and water them then. Over-irrigation can cause fungus and rot, which can kill your wildflowers. It can also cause them to grow too quickly, making them susceptible to pests and diseases, or too tall, requiring staking.

## Fertilizer

Native wildflowers should not need fertilizer. Applying fertilizer can produce plants that grow too quickly, which can lead them to become pest and disease prone, and too tall, requiring staking. Fertilizing also encourages weeds, which may out-compete wildflowers.

## Sustaining wildflowers

If you want wildflowers to persist on their own in your landscape, you'll need to allow for self-seeding, especially for annual or short-lived species. Keep open, lightly mulched areas available for seed to germinate. You also can collect seed and plant it where you want it. When seeds germinate, you'll need to recognize wildflower sprouts so you don't pull them out when weeding. To download a PDF document showing some common wildflower seedlings, visit [www.FlaWildflowers.org/planting](http://www.FlaWildflowers.org/planting).

Many wildflowers are deciduous, dying back in the winter, particularly in colder areas of the state. Don't plant over them before they re-sprout in the spring, and don't weed them out when they sprout. Mark areas with deciduous plants so you can be on the lookout for their seasonal comeback.

## Mulch

We recommend Florida pine straw. To help prevent weed germination in the first month or two after planting, apply a 2- to 4-inch layer of mulch, but keep it away from the base of the plants. Once plants are established and before they fully flower, carefully reduce the mulch to a thin layer. Too much mulch can contribute to fungal and rot problems. To promote self-seeding, spread mulch thinly enough that you can see the soil below.

## Hardiness zones

Information on hardiness zones is included for each species. To see which zone your home or project is in, see the map on the inside back cover.

## Botanical terms

For definitions of botanical terms, visit [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary\\_of\\_botanical\\_terms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms).

## Other species

For information on other wildflower species not covered in this publication, check out the plant profiles at [www.FlaWildflowers.org/category/flower-friday](http://www.FlaWildflowers.org/category/flower-friday).

The symbols at the top of each page can help you select plants suitable for your geographic location and soil and light conditions. They will also help you choose plants based on other factors, such as color and season of bloom, as well as what type of pollinators you would like to attract to your landscape.

<b>Bloom color</b>	 White	 Pink
	 Red	 Orange
	 Yellow	 Green
	 Blue	 Purple
	 Brown	

*This color key is meant as a general guide; exact colors of blooms will vary.*

<b>Bloom season</b>	 Spring
	 Summer
	 Fall
	 Winter
<b>Light</b>	 Full sun
	 Partial sun/shade
	 Shade tolerant
<b>Soil moisture</b>	 Dry
	 Dry to moist
	 Wet
<b>Habit</b>	This is the average height of a mature plant.
<b>Wildlife use</b>	Plant is a source of nectar, seeds or other insects, or is a larval host plant.



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Cover photo credits (clockwise from upper left): Landscape with Dune sunflower (*Helianthus debilis*) by Lisa Roberts; Pinebarren goldenrod (*Solidago fistulosa*) by Ryan Brown; Tropical sage (*Salvia coccinea*) by Troy Springer; and Monarch with Pink milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) by Peg Urban.



2–4 ft

Nectar



Pink milkweed

*Asclepias* species produce showy flowers in a variety of colors. They are excellent for attracting butterflies and other pollinating insects. They are a must for Monarch butterflies, as they are the Monarch's primary host plant.

Florida has 21 native *Asclepias* species, most of which are perennials. Six are available commercially, most commonly Butterflyweed (*A. tuberosa* subsp. *rolfsii*), Pink milkweed (*A. incarnata*) and White milkweed (*A. perennis*).

Butterflyweed is the most widely recognized native milkweed. It occurs in sandy uplands and is good for dry landscapes. Pink milkweed is a striking species and makes an excellent addition to moist, sunny landscapes. White milkweed is also good for moist to wet spots.

## Description

*Asclepias* flowers consist of petals that reflex backward and an upright crown (corona) of crested hoods that are often mistaken for petals.

Butterflyweed is the most widely recognized of the native milkweeds. It produces showy clusters of bright reddish-orange flowers and has coarse



Queen butterfly on White milkweed



Phaon crescent butterfly on Butterflyweed

oval- to lance-shaped leaves. Its peak bloom time is late spring through late fall. Butterflyweed lacks the milky sap of most milkweeds. The Florida subspecies tends to be less bushy than its northern counterpart.

Pink milkweed flowers range in color from light pink to rose. Its leaves are lance- to linear-shaped and up to 6 inches long.

White milkweed produces white to pale pink flowers. It is a shorter, more delicate species of milkweed. Its leaves are lance-shaped and bright green. It produces smaller flowerheads than the others.

## Butterflies and bees

Milkweed is the larval host plant for Monarch, Queen and Soldier butterflies and is an important nectar source for these and other butterflies, including Pipevine, Spicebush and Eastern swallowtails.

Native sweat bees, leafcutter bees and yellow-faced bees forage the flowers for pollen and nectar.

## Planting

Milkweed works best in mixed butterfly and wildflower gardens. In the landscape, space plants 2 to 3 feet apart in clusters of three or more plants.

## Seeds

The small, flat seeds are born in pods that split to release seeds. Attached to each seed are silky white filaments that aid in wind dispersal. Seeds may be collected from plants once pods split. Native ecotype milkweed seeds are generally not commercially available.

Seeds can be stored in the refrigerator for a couple of months. Plant seeds by barely covering them with soil. Seedlings should be potted and allowed to grow to 3 inches before transplanting.

## Plants

Milkweeds are typically available in 4-inch, 6-inch and gallon pots.

## Care

Most milkweeds require light annual pruning to remove dead stems.

## Site conditions

Butterflyweed is best suited for dry to slightly moist well-drained soils in full sun. Pink and White milkweeds require moist to wet soils, and do well along pond edges or similar sites. They can tolerate short periods of drought once established, but soil should be kept moist to wet in summer. Pink milkweed does best in full sun but may adjust to partial shade. White milkweed can tolerate more shade. Both do well in pots.

## Hardiness zones

Butterflyweed and Pink milkweed are best suited for zones 8A–10B; White milkweed does best in zones 8A–9B.

Do not confuse these plants with their non-native relative, Tropical milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*), which is typically sold at big box retail garden centers. *A. curassavica*, which does not die back in winter in Florida as do native milkweeds, can encourage overwintering in adult Monarch butterflies and is linked to the transmission of *Ophryocystis elektroscirrha* (OE) infection. Inquire about species to ensure you are purchasing a native, or visit a nursery that specializes in native plants. When purchasing milkweed plants or seeds, look for and request local ecotypes propagated from responsibly collected seeds.

**CAUTION**



1½–4 ft

Nectar



Photo by Peg Urban

Maryland goldenaster

Goldenaster (*Chrysopsis* spp.) is a member of the Asteraceae (daisy) family. Members of this genus range from the Northeastern U.S. to the southern Midwest and the entire Southeast. Florida has 11 native *Chrysopsis* species, eight of which are endemic. Look for them primarily in scrub habitats and well-drained pinelands.

## Description

Florida's goldenasters include species found nowhere else in the world, and several are listed by the state as rare or endangered. The most commonly encountered species are Maryland goldenaster (*Chrysopsis mariana*) and Coastalplain goldenaster (*C. scabrella*). Maryland goldenaster is found in well-drained pinelands throughout Florida, with the exception of the extreme south. Coastalplain goldenaster is a short-lived biennial, occurring in sandhills throughout the peninsula, except for the extreme southern portion.

Florida goldenaster (*C. floridana*) is naturally rare — endemic only to four counties in west Central Florida. However, it is often commercially available and easy to grow. It is more compact than other *Chrysopsis* species and is most attractive in late spring and early summer when not in bloom. Its beautiful silvery white foliage is reminiscent of lupine.

Goldenaster's clusters of yellow daisylike flowers are cheerful and profuse, with multiple buds at the end of each branch. Flowering usually peaks in late summer or early fall and lasts up to a month, depending on the species. All are deciduous, losing their foliage in winter and rising in spring from a basal rosette of soft wooly leaves covered with dense white "hairs."



Photo by Bob Peterson

Bumble bee on Coastalplain goldenaster

Coastalplain goldenaster can be leggy, with stalks that can reach up to 4 feet. Its blooms are limited to the crown of the plant. Maryland goldenaster grows more compactly than its cousins, standing up to 18 inches tall. Its leaves are elliptical and bright green, and its attractive foliage, along with its larger flowers, make it appealing for landscapes.

## Planting

Goldenaster is drought tolerant once established and performs best in full sun, but also adapts to high pine shade. Use it as a "mid-section" addition to gardens, planting it well behind the border. Because of some species' leggy growth, consider planting goldenaster among sturdy wildflowers that can help keep plants erect.

When planted in mass, goldenaster can be an eye-catcher when blooming — just keep in mind its deciduous nature.

*Chrysopsis* plants can be planted any time and should bloom within a year of planting. However, if plants are large and close to blooming when planted, they may not have time to become established



Photo by Troy Springer

Florida goldenaster's silvery white foliage

well enough to yield an abundance of blooms.

## Seeds

Maryland goldenaster seeds are available from the Florida Wildflower Seed Cooperative. Sow in well-drained soil in late fall or winter. Seeds collected from plants should be sown immediately.

## Plants

Maryland goldenaster is the most-available species sold by native nurseries, while Florida and Coastalplain are occasionally available.

## Butterflies and bees

The plant's flower nectar is attractive to native butterflies, as well as to a variety of native bees with long tongues, including green metallic bees, sweat bees, leafcutter bees, bumble bees, mining bees and miner bees.

## Care

Goldenaster needs little, if any, grooming. Resist the temptation to nip back its stems when it sprawls; doing so will reduce its ability to flower. Let seeds ripen on stems once fall flowering is done, and you'll be rewarded with more plants the next spring. When stems die and become brittle, they may be trimmed from the plant.

## Site conditions

In general, goldenaster loves full sun and does best in well-drained sandy soils. Plant Coastalplain goldenaster in sandy, well-drained soil. Florida goldenaster does best in white, scrub-like sand. It is most likely to reseed in these conditions. Maryland goldenaster will tolerate wetter and more organic conditions than other *Chrysopsis* species. All commercially available species adapt well to sunny urban landscapes if not overwatered.

## Hardiness zones

Maryland goldenaster is suited to zones 8A–9B. Florida and Coastalplain goldenaster are best for zone 9.

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2–3 ft
Nectar



Photo by Andrea England

*Conradina canescens*

Plants in the *Conradina* or False rosemary genus may look like their namesake cousin, whose leaves are used as a savory cooking spice, but these members of the Lamiaceae (mint) family emit a minty-fresh smell when their leaves are crushed. There are six *Conradina* species found in Florida; only one, *Conradina canescens*, is not considered endangered or threatened.

The plants are evergreen and reward gardeners with a display of fragrant white-lavender blooms.

## Description

*Conradina* are small perennial shrubs that mature into 2- to 3-foot-wide and -tall silvery-green clumps. Their short, needlelike leaves grow densely from upright stems that branch from a main woody stem.

*Conradina canescens* occurs in the western Panhandle, and is found in dry disturbed areas and on dunes. Short-leaved false rosemary (*C. brevifolia*), a federally listed endangered species, is found only in scrub habitats in Polk and Highlands counties in south Central Florida. It reaches out with graceful fingers that give it a unique character apart from *C. canescens*. Largeflower false rosemary (*C. grandiflora*), a state-listed threatened species, can be found on scrubby sites in coastal counties in the central and southern peninsula. It has larger flowers and a more upright growth. All are very drought-resistant once established.

Prolific flowers cover *Conradina* in spring, and the plant can keep blooming through late fall. This versatile deer-resistant groundcover can be used in mass plantings, as a single specimen or in a pot.



Photo by Ron and Diane Bynum

*Conradina grandiflora* with needlelike leaves

## Planting

*Conradina* can last three or more years in landscapes. Plant in sandy, well-drained soil, and water until established. *Conradina* releases a chemical that suppresses the growth of other vegetation, including weeds, and thus may be beneficial, but also may restrict growth of other plants close by.

## Seeds

Seeds are not commercially available, but may be collected from plants when fresh. Sow in spring in well-drained soil and keep moist until germination occurs.

## Butterflies and bees

*Conradina* is attractive to some butterflies and moths, but it mostly draws native bees, including large carpenter and digger bees. Honey bees also have been seen sampling its nectar.

## Plants

Plants are readily available from nurseries specializing in native plants. *Conradina* also can be easily started from cuttings (4-inch non-branching terminal shoots) in well-drained potting soil in small pots. Mist daily and do not allow soil to dry. Prune before transplanting or within one week after transplanting. Pinch tips to encourage branching.

## Care

*Conradina* may be trimmed after flowering, but most gardeners leave it alone and enjoy its beautiful natural form. Sections of older, well-established plants

may die suddenly; remove these to encourage new growth. *C. grandiflora* will tolerate some overhead or drip irrigation. Other *Conradina* species should be watered only during extended dry periods. Because this plant thrives naturally in dry ecosystems, overwatering may cause rot and decline.

## Site conditions

*Conradina* is ideal for dry, sandy soils in full sun. It will thrive on natural rainfall. If your landscape is irrigated on a regular basis, look for a spot that remains dry.

## Hardiness zones

*Conradina grandiflora* is suited for zone 9. *C. canescens* is best for 8A–9B.

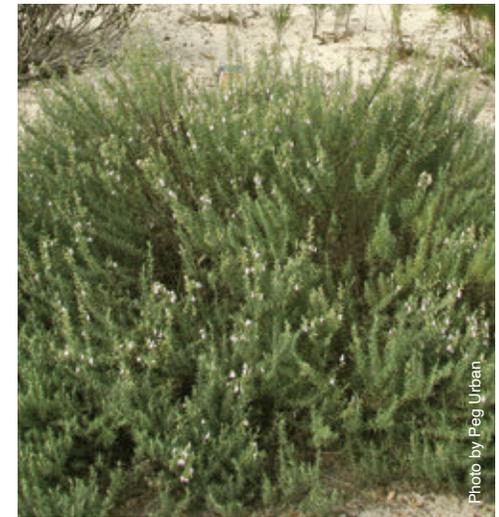


Photo by Peg Urban

*Conradina grandiflora* in a landscape

Of the six *Conradina* species in the state, all but *C. canescens* are endangered or threatened, and thus limited in population.

Because these species can hybridize, it is important to plant the species found naturally in your area to help preserve the distinct genetic identities and ecological roles of these plants. In Polk and Highlands counties, choose *C. brevifolia*. Along the central and southern east coast, choose *C. grandiflora*. Ask your nursery supplier for the species native to your locale.

**CAUTION**





1–3 ft
Nectar



Leavenworth's tickseed

Florida's state wildflower is *Coreopsis*, also known as tickseed, and refers to all 14 species native to Florida. Many of these occur only in North Florida and the Panhandle. The most common species, Leavenworth's tickseed (*Coreopsis leavenworthii*), is almost entirely endemic to Florida, which means it occurs naturally nowhere else in the world. This plant can be found throughout Florida, especially on roadsides and in disturbed areas, flatwoods and prairies. It has been used to make tea and for treating various medical ailments.

## Butterflies and bees

*Coreopsis* is a great nectar plant for butterflies and pollinators.

## Description

Leavenworth's tickseed is an annual but can be a short-lived perennial in the southern half of Florida. Its bouquets of yellow daisy-like flowers bloom throughout the year when the weather is warm. The 1- to 2-inch flowers have dark centers surrounded by scalloped yellow ray florets, which look like petals but technically aren't. Leavenworth's tickseed grows 1½ to 3 feet tall on slender stems with many branches. Its bright green leaves are narrow and range from simple to lobed or deeply divided, thus giving the plant a more open appearance.

## Planting

As an annual or short-lived perennial, Leavenworth's tickseed needs a site that offers space for it to reseed. It can reseed between other plants, such as other

wildflowers, if they are not too competitive. They may be planted anytime of the year; plant in the spring for the full benefit of flowering. Space 1 to 2 feet apart. *Coreopsis* establishes quickly in moist soils.

## Seeds

Seeds are commercially available, or you can harvest your own. They mature very quickly after flower petals have withered. Look for mature seeds with "wings" on their sides in the little cup at the tip of the stem. Germination usually occurs in less than seven days. The first leaves of a seedling are not lobed and have rounded tips.

## Plants

Leavenworth's tickseed is available in quarts and gallons.

## Care

Because this plant is an annual, especially in colder areas, cold protection is not needed. Leavenworth's tickseed is relatively disease- and pest-free, though some critters may feed on it.

If the plants are cut back near the end of their bloom, they will produce another flush of flowers. Plants can be string-trimmed or mowed at a 6- to 8-inch height.

## Site conditions

Leavenworth's tickseed likes any open, moist site, preferably sandy and drained, but is not very particular about soil acidity. Full sun produces the most flowers. Though it can tolerate some drought and drier soils, it will not perform as well. Moist soils also allow for reseeding — important in maintaining this species.

## Hardiness zones

Leavenworth's tickseed is best suited for zones 8A–11.

## Other species

Lanceleaf tickseed (*C. lanceolata*) grows naturally in North Florida and the Panhandle in sandhills and disturbed areas, but it is widely used farther south. It is a short-lived perennial that readily reseeds. Its yellow ray flowers are complemented by a golden disk atop fairly thick stems. This spring bloomer can flower into summer with dead-heading

and is drought tolerant.

Florida tickseed (*C. floridana*) is endemic to Florida and grows in wet prairies and wet pine flatwoods throughout the state. This perennial has thick fleshy leaves and larger flowers than Leavenworth's tickseed. It blooms in the fall on stems up to 3 feet tall. Yellow ray flowers surround a deep brown disk.



Lanceleaf tickseed



Florida tickseed

For *Coreopsis leavenworthii*, which occurs throughout Florida, the origin of the plants or seed does not seem to be a factor in successful growth, according to recent research. If other species of *Coreopsis* are being considered, look for local sources, as most other species occur far outside of Florida. Some, such as Lanceleaf tickseed, also have popular horticultural varieties developed from progeny outside Florida.

**CAUTION**

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💧
6–10 in
Host, nectar



Photo by Mary Keim

Oblongleaf twinflower

If you are looking for an easy, low-maintenance groundcover, consider Oblongleaf twinflower (*Dyschoriste oblongifolia*). This perennial wildflower has an extended bloom period and is adaptable to a variety of conditions. It prefers open, sunny areas but can tolerate shade (although flowers won't be as profuse). It typically blooms spring through fall and is commonly found in dry to moist habitats of sandhills, flatwoods and upland mixed forests throughout peninsular Florida and into the central Panhandle. Of the three native *Dyschoriste* species, Oblongleaf twinflower is the largest and most commonly available for purchase.

Other native twinflower species are Pineland twinflower (*D. angusta*) and Swamp twinflower (*D. humistrata*). Both species are rather small compared with *D. oblongifolia*. Swamp twinflower typically blooms in spring. It makes an excellent groundcover and turf replacement in moist to wet soils and does very well in



Photo by Peg Urban

Twinflower makes an excellent groundcover.

shady well-drained soils. It also adapts to seasonally dry conditions. Pineland twinflower is more common in South Florida, where it can bloom year-round.

Both Swamp and Pineland twinflower have smaller flowers than Oblongleaf twinflower. Swamp twinflower's leaves are rounder and have a succulent appearance, while Pineland's leaves are linear.

Twinflower is so-named because its flowers are born in pairs. It is also referred to as snakeherb.

## Description

Oblongleaf twinflower grows to between 6 and 10 inches tall and is spreading. Its small 1-inch blooms are light-blue to purple and funnel-shaped, with five lobed petals. The lower petal bears dark marks or streaks that extend into the throat. Each bloom has four stamens and five calyces. Twinflower's simple leaves are linear, dark green, pubescent and oppositely arranged on thin stems.

## Butterflies and bees

Twinflower's nectar attracts a few species of butterflies, including the Malachite and White Peacock. It is a host plant for the Common buckeye. Look for small pale-green eggs laid singly on leaves. Common buckeye caterpillars eat both leaves and flowers and may be seen on the plants year-round and especially in fall.

Leafcutter, bumble and honey bees are also attracted to the flower.

## Planting

Plants should be installed 18 to 24 inches apart as they spread quickly. To propagate, take stem cuttings or divide clumps in summer.

Twinflower forms dense colonies by underground runners. It is also a prolific self-seeder and, in the best conditions, may require regular weeding of seedlings to keep it under control.

All three native twinflower species are well-suited for life in a hanging basket or pot. Pay attention to soil moisture levels, particularly with Swamp twinflower, as it will quickly begin to perish if it dries out.

## Seeds

Seeds are not available commercially at this time.

## Plants

Twinflower is often available at nurseries that specialize in native plants.

## Care

In winter, plants are semi-dormant and can be trimmed or mown to 3 inches to freshen. Plants will go dormant in areas that receive frost (usually in North Florida) but will quickly recover in spring.

## Site conditions

Oblongleaf twinflower prefers full sun and well-drained soils. Planting in partial shade will result in a less dense cover. Swamp twinflower is acclimated to moist soils and partially shady conditions. Pineland twinflower prefers well-drained calcaerous or sandy soils. Once established, it is very drought tolerant.

One of the best uses for this plant is as a low groundcover near sidewalks, walkways or naturalized areas. The plant spreads by underground rhizomes and by self-sown seed. It will flower intermittently spring through fall. Twinflower is not salt tolerant, making it a poor candidate for coastal landscapes.

## Hardiness zones

Oblongleaf twinflower is suitable for zones 8A–11. Pineland twinflower is best suited for zones 8A–10A, while Swamp twinflower does well in zones 8B–11.



Photo by Bob Peterson

Pineland twinflower



12–18 in.

Nectar



Photo by Mary Keim

Florida greeneyes



Photo by Jean McColgan

Gulf fritillary on Florida greeneyes

Florida greeneyes (*Berlandiera subacaulis*) is a perennial herbaceous wildflower endemic to Florida. It occurs naturally in sandhills, dry pine flatwoods, and mixed upland forests, as well as along dry roadsides. It typically blooms in spring and summer, but may bloom year-round in southern climates.

## Description

Florida greeneyes' flowers consist of vibrant yellow ray florets surrounding a head of greenish-yellow tubular disk florets. The flowers are held at their base by a cup of soft greenish-yellow bracts. Seeds develop in the bracts and mature into a distinctive, platelike seedhead. Only ray florets produce seed.



Photo by Nancy Bissett

The plant is a profuse bloomer.

The plant's dark green basal leaves are ovately shaped with scalloped margins when young; they become more deeply lobed as they mature. Stems are hairy.

Florida greeneyes (as well as other *Berlandiera* species) have been informally referred to as "chocolate flowers" because the open disk florets emit a subtle chocolatey fragrance.

## Butterflies and bees

Florida greeneyes attracts a variety of bees and butterflies.

## Planting

Plantings can be established by seed or plants. Space plants as close as 12 inches apart or mix with grasses and other wildflowers.



Photo by Stacey Matrazzo

Young leaf margins are scalloped.

## Seeds

Seeds are commercially available, or collect your own after ray florets drop and seeds are dry.

## Plants

Florida greeneyes is available at nurseries that specialize in native plants. It is sold in quart and gallon containers.

## Care

Established plants are drought tolerant, so supplemental watering might be needed only during extended dry periods. Cut old flowerheads to extend flowering and help keep the plant looking neat.

Propagation by division is possible but may be difficult, as plants are joined by a thick tuberous root.

## Site conditions

Florida greeneyes is easy to establish in the garden. It grows best in full sun to high pine shade and in dry to moderately moist, well-drained sandy or rocky soils. Its tuberous root, which can be as thick as 12 inches in older plants, makes it very drought tolerant. Once established, Florida greeneyes can form large clumps and produce copious blooms, creating a beautiful display.

## Hardiness zones

Florida greeneyes is best suited for zones 8B–10B.



Photo by Peter Connolly

Florida greeneyes' distinctive, platelike seedhead



8–24 in

Nectar



Photo by Ron and Diane Bynum

Tampa verbena

Three native verbena species occur in Florida. Two of them — Beach verbena (*Glandularia maritima*) and Tampa verbena (*G. tampensis*) — are state-listed as endemic and endangered. Both are attractive and work well in landscapes.

## Description

Tampa verbena occurs on the east and west coasts of peninsular Florida, from Lee to Levy counties on the west side and from Volusia to Indian River counties on the east. Beach verbena is found mostly on the east coast — from St. Johns to Monroe counties — but also has been documented in Levy County on the west coast.

Verbena produces clusters of deep pink to lavender flowers year-round, although the most prolific flowering occurs in spring and summer. Its flowers — along with its adaptable nature and attractive dark-green, diamond-shaped leaves — have earned it a place in many gardens. Both species are short-lived evergreen



Photo by Melanie Long

Zebra longwing on Tampa verbena



Photo by Andrea England

Beach verbena

perennials, lasting up to three years. Tampa verbena reaches up to 2 feet in height with a spread of 3 to 4 feet. Beach verbena is a low-growing, sprawling plant with a maximum height of 8 inches and a spread of 2 feet or more when mature.

## Butterflies and bees

Verbena is a good nectar source for a variety of butterflies and moths, including Gulf fritillaries, hawkmoths and Long-tailed skippers. It is also attractive to miner bees and long-tongued bees such as bumble and orchid bees.

## Planting

Use verbena as a low groundcover in a bed, on a woodland edge, or in a container or above-ground planter. It is particularly striking when used in masses. Plants should be spaced from 3 to 4 feet apart to allow for their spread. They may be planted anytime between February and December.

## Seeds

Seeds of these species are not usually available commercially. Verbena does not reseed readily in landscapes.

## Plants

Plants are available at native nurseries and some mainstream retail nurseries.

## Care

Verbena is relatively free of pests and disease, provided it isn't watered too much. Light pruning may be necessary in

more formal settings; otherwise, plants are maintenance-free.

## Site conditions

Beach verbena adapts to a variety of acidic and alkaline soils, including clay, loam and sand. Try it in dry, low-nutrient soils where other plants have trouble growing; do not over-irrigate it. Plant in full sun. Because it's found in coastal communities, its salt and drought tolerance is high.

Tampa verbena prefers more moisture and can adapt to full sun and partial shade. It does well in a container, provided it receives sufficient sun and is watered often.

Verbena can sustain freeze damage in northern counties.

## Hardiness zones

Beach verbena is best suited for zones 8B–11, while Tampa verbena is better for zones 9A–10B.



Photo by Peg Urban

Tampa verbena

There are many non-native verbenas available. Be sure to ask your nursery or supplier for native species.

**CAUTION**

Verbena species may hybridize, so it is important to plant the species found naturally in your area to help preserve the distinct genetic identities and ecological roles of these plants.



Dune sunflower

Of Florida's 17 native sunflower species, gardeners will most often find Dune or Beach sunflower (*Helianthus debilis*). Dune sunflower naturally occurs along the coast, but adapts well for inland use.

## Description

Dune sunflower, a perennial with bright yellow flowers, blooms throughout the year. It will die back in North Florida in winter. Depending on the variety (see Caution), this plant may be spreading or upright. As a groundcover, it may sprawl several feet, but generally is no more than 1 or 2 feet high. The upright variety can be taller.

## Planting

Give Dune sunflower room to roam, as it spreads readily. Plant in masses 3 to 4 feet apart. Do not irrigate after establishment. Plants can reseed prolifically. Seedlings may be carefully dug up and relocated. Be sure to water transplanted seedlings well until they are established.

## Seeds

Seeds are available commercially. To collect your own, allow flower heads to dry on the plants, then break them open to collect seeds.

## Plants

Dune sunflower is readily available in containers from native nurseries. It also is often available at commercial garden centers. (See Caution.)

## Care

Dune sunflower will get leggy and messy-looking over time. Remove old stems and let new plants sprout from seeds. Light trims every three months will help keep

foliage looking fresh. This plant will also regenerate from the rootstock if winters are mild.

## Site conditions

Plant dune sunflower in full sun for best flowering. Plants will tolerate light shade for part of the day.

Dune sunflower is salt and wind tolerant. It likes exceedingly well-drained sandy soils. Avoid persistently moist or heavily irrigated situations.

## Butterflies and bees

All of Florida's native sunflowers are excellent nectar plants for butterflies and pollinators.

## Hardiness zones

Dune sunflower does best when used in zones 8A–11.

## Other species

Narrowleaf sunflower (*H. angustifolius*) may also be available at nurseries specializing in native plants. It naturally grows throughout the Panhandle, North and Central Florida south to Lake Okeechobee and is suitable for zones 8A–10A. It prefers moist acidic soils. Its showy golden flowers are 3 inches across with reddish-brown centers. It can reach 4 to 6 feet in height. It has long narrow, rough leaves and blooms in the fall. It may die back in winter, particularly in North Florida. It's a great choice for a large, sunny, moist meadow; a lake edge or retention pond; a ditch; or the back of a bog garden. It spreads aggressively by its roots and may outcompete other wildflowers in a small garden. Space plants 2 to 3 feet apart. Consider using it



Rayless sunflower

where you won't mind seeing spent stems and flowers after a bloom. Stems can be pinched back in late spring or early summer to encourage shorter, bushier growth and more blooms. Divide plants for using elsewhere.

Gardeners may encounter two other species: Rayless sunflower (*H. radula*) and Lakeside sunflower (*H. carnosus*). Rayless sunflower has no sunny yellow ray flowers — just dark, purplish flowerheads on 2- to 3-foot stems in the fall. Despite the lack of ray flowers, Rayless sunflower attracts many small bees and butterflies. Its leaves are also unusual — large, round, thick and relatively flat on the ground. You can use this plant in well-drained moist soils from Lake Okeechobee northward. Mix in a few with ornamental grasses and other wildflowers for visual contrast.

Lakeside sunflower blooms from late spring to fall with showy 3-inch yellow flowers with greenish-yellow centers. The 1- to 3-foot stems rise from an evergreen basal rosette. Central and North Florida gardeners can use it in moist-to-wet soils.

Use Rayless and Lakeside sunflowers in zones 8A–9B.

There are three distinct subspecies of Dune sunflower: East Coast dune sunflower, West Coast dune sunflower (*Helianthus debilis* subsp. *vestitus*) and Cucumberleaf dune sunflower (*H. debilis* subsp. *cucumerifolius*). Most native nurseries should know the difference; other nurseries may not. Environmentally conscientious gardeners living along the coast should ask their nursery supplier for the subspecies native to their locale. This will help preserve the distinct identities and ecological roles of these plants.

Narrowleaf sunflower naturally ranges as far west as Texas and as far north as New York. Large retail outlets and national seed suppliers sell varieties originating from out of state. Their performance in your landscape can be different than Florida ecotypes.

**CAUTION**


  
 
 
1–3 ft
Nectar



Photo by Mary Keim

Fourpetal St. John's wort



Photo by Ron and Diane Bynum

St. Andrew's cross

Thirty-one species of St. John's wort (*Hypericum* spp.) are found in Florida. All are native, and several are on state and federal endangered plant lists. In nature, look for St. John's wort in sandhill and flatwood habitats, as well as on the margins of cypress swamps and marshes.

Species vary in the appearance of their leaves, but their reddish stems and delightful yellow flowers are constants. Some have short needlelike leaves, while others might look as if they belong to a different genus entirely.

## Description

St. John's wort is an evergreen perennial shrub known for its outstanding ornamental features. With sturdy reddish-brown twigs, species in this genus can grow from 1 to 3 feet tall and have spreads of 2 feet or more. Species found at native nurseries typically have 1-inch yellow flowers with four or five petals that contrast with their dark green foliage. Plants of most species flower in summer.

Atlantic St. John's wort (*H. tenuifolium*) is the most typical species encountered at nurseries and plant sales. It likes dry to moist soils and usually doesn't need any pruning, maintaining a delightful, mounding shape. Its summer blooms last a month or more. St. Andrew's cross (*H. hypericoides*), found in nature in moist shaded areas, has an elegant, feathery form and produces three seasons of flowers. For a showy addition to the garden, consider Fourpetal St. John's wort (*H. tetrapetalum*), which has larger, four-petaled flowers; and Myrtleleaf St. John's wort (*H. myrtifolium*), which has blue-green foliage and rich yellow flowers.

## Butterflies and bees

*Hypericum* species are attractive to polyester, yellow-face, large carpenter, bumble, leafcutter, resin and sweat bees, as well as to Gray hairstreak butterflies, whose caterpillars feed on its seed capsules.



Photo by Mary Keim

Atlantic St. John's wort



Photo by Peg Urban

Myrtleleaf St. John's wort

## Planting

St. John's wort can be used a foundation plant, along a border or edge, or in a mass planting. Space plants from 24 to 36 inches apart.

## Seeds

Native ecotype seeds are not available commercially but may be collected from plants when dry. Sow directly in the garden in the fall for spring growth.

## Plants

Plants are sold in 1-gallon containers.

## Care

These hardy perennials are easy to care for once established. A light pruning in winter, if needed, is all established plants require to maintain a desired shape. Give wetland species a drink after a few days without rain.

## Site conditions

St. John's wort does best when planted in full sun to part-shade in sandy soils. However, they can adapt to a variety of other soils, including clay and loam, and acidic and lightly alkaline soils. Plants are not salt tolerant and are moderately drought tolerant once established. Keep Myrtleleaf St. John's wort, a wetland species, moist by adding it to a rain garden or moist site.

## Hardiness zones

Most St. John's wort species are suitable for zones 8A–10B, though St. Andrew's cross' southern limit is 9B.

The St. John's wort that is promoted as a supplement for use in treating depression is a non-native species. According to Dan Austin in his book, *Florida Ethnobotany*, using native St. John's wort can lead to dermatitis or photosensitization due to a hypericin compound found in the plants.

Some species may be toxic to livestock.







2–4 ft
Nectar



Dense blazing star

Florida gardeners will find four native *Liatris* species on the market: Chapman's blazing star (*Liatris chapmanii*), Dense blazing star (*L. spicata*), Evergreen blazing star (*L. laevigata*) and Graceful blazing star (*L. gracilis*). These species are found throughout Florida.

Blazing stars have long been a favorite in floral bouquets. Flowers start opening at the top of the stem and continue to bloom after cutting.

Native Americans used these plants to treat a variety of illnesses, and researchers have discovered anti-cancer substances in various species. Modern herbalists use the plants for homeopathic remedies and in potpourris and insect repellants.

## Description

Blazing stars are among our taller perennial wildflowers, generally standing 2 to 4 feet. One or more flowering stems rise from basal rosettes in the summer, with blooms appearing anywhere from late summer through fall, depending on the species. This is a deciduous wildflower — it overwinters underground and sends up stalks from thickened, cormlike rootstock, which resembles underground bulbs. Foliage tends to be thin or not particularly noticeable. However, Evergreen blazing star does maintain a visible basal rosette in the winter.

Chapman's blazing star blooms as early as August and into September, with light-lavender-colored blooms. Dense blazing star, the most commonly available and typically tallest of the species, has bright lavender-colored blooms from October into early November. Evergreen

blazing star has lavender-colored flowers anywhere from September through October. Graceful blazing star has light-to bright-lavender flowers in October and November.

## Planting

Blazing stars require little ground space and can be used even in small gardens. While you can plant anytime of the year, you may be most successful planting in spring after plants emerge from dormancy. To provide seasonal color and vertical interest, place plants in clusters in beds of mixed wildflowers and ornamental grasses. To lengthen your blooming season, plant more than one species. Blazing star's thin, stiff, upright silhouette is complemented by plants with rounder or spreading forms, wide strappy leaves, and different flower shapes and sizes.

## Seeds

Seeds are commercially available. To collect your own, wait until the flowers are light tan in color and fluffy, then shake or lightly brush the flowers into a container. The brown achenes are the seeds.

## Plants

Blazing stars are available in 4-inch and gallon containers. Space plants 12 to 15 inches apart. Keep them watered until you see new growth or seasonal rains begin.

## Care

Staking is only needed when plants have been over-irrigated or -fertilized and are weak from having grown too quickly.

Cut stems only if necessary, and carefully, because plants pull up easily. For this reason, be very careful when weeding around them. You may want to mark your plants so you will remember where they are in the spring.

After flowering, the dead stems shelter insects — an important food source for birds. Birds will also feed on the seeds.

## Site conditions

All the plants listed here need full sun for best flowering and well-drained soils. Some blazing stars are especially sensitive to persistent moisture in the soil. Chapman's blazing star prefers dry, very well-drained, deep sand. Graceful and Evergreen blazing star are found in dry

to moist sandhills and dry to mesic flatwoods. Do not plant these species where the ground remains moist or wet. Dense blazing star prefers a moist-wet situation, but is fairly adaptable and surprisingly drought tolerant.

## Butterflies and bees

Blazing stars are excellent nectar plants and will reliably attract numerous butterflies, moths, bees and other insect pollinators. Hummingbirds may also nectar on the flowers.

## Hardiness zones

Chapman's, Dense, Evergreen and Graceful blazing star can be grown in Zones 8A–11.

## Other species

You may also find Elegant blazing star (*L. elegans*) suitable for exceptionally deep, well-drained sand in North and North Central Florida.



Graceful blazing star

Non-native blazing star plants are often sold in large retail stores and garden centers. Blazing star seed sold by out-of-state vendors is typically not Florida native ecotype.

**CAUTION**



3–4 ft

Nectar



Spotted beebalm

Spotted beebalm (*Monarda punctata*), also known as Dotted horsemint, occurs south to Lee and Palm Beach counties in dry sandy soils that are often disturbed sites, such as roadsides, but also in open pine flatwoods. It is moderately tolerant of salt spray and can be found near the Gulf of Mexico and along the Indian River Lagoon.

It is a good cut flower for fresh or dry arrangements. Native American tribes used the plant to treat a wide variety of ailments. A weak tea can be made from the leaves.

## Description

*Monarda punctata* is a perennial that dies back to the ground in winter in North Florida, but can retain some foliage farther south. It is multi-stemmed, almost bushy in form, with a 2- to 4-foot spread and height of about 3 feet. It can grow taller with irrigation and fertilizer. Its bright green, lance-shaped leaves make attractive foliage that is scented like oregano or thyme.

The whorls of flowers are creamy white to yellow with purple spots, and are underlain with even showier bracts of lavender to cream. The whorls are repeated several times on a single stem. Because of its height and ability to spread easily by seed, it should be used toward the back of the landscape or in a place of its own.

## Planting

As a perennial, Spotted beebalm will come back each year, and can be divided to produce more plants in the spring when there is new growth (plants



Zebra swallowtail on Spotted beebalm

may be too woody for division in summer or fall). It readily reseeds itself in the garden. Plants should be 2 to 3 feet apart. Don't crowd plants; allow for good air circulation. Mulching may help to reduce the number of unwanted seedlings.

## Seeds

Seeds are commercially available, or collect your own after flowering is complete and stems are drying. The seeds, or nutlets, are found in the calyx at the base of the flower. Look for almost-black seeds the size of poppy seeds as a sign of maturity. To collect, cut and shake stems into a container.

## Butterflies and bees

Spotted beebalm is known as perhaps the best Florida wildflower for attracting vast numbers of pollinators. From summer through fall, the showy blooms attract butterflies and a great variety of other insects not generally seen in any other season, including many native bee species. Hummingbirds also use it.

## Plants

Four-inch to 1-gallon pots are available.

## Care

Spotted beebalm is quite drought resistant, but during prolonged spring droughts, it may need a little extra water.

In early summer, plants can be cut back to reduce the height and still produce blooms. Trimming the bloom stalks near the end of flowering may also help

lengthen the bloom period. Spent stems are beneficial to insects and birds, but can be cut back to the emergent growth if desired for tidiness.

Spotted beebalm contains a chemical called thymol that helps to prevent fungal and bacterial diseases, so it is relatively trouble-free.

## Site Conditions

Full sun will bring out the best flowering, but partial shade also works. Spotted beebalm does best in sandy, well-drained soils. Some moisture may be tolerated, but when more nutrients or water are available, the plant is likely to grow taller and even fall over, requiring extra trimming or staking. In wet conditions, it can be susceptible to fungal attacks.

## Hardiness zones

Spotted beebalm is best suited for zones 8A–10A.



Gulf fritillaries on Spotted beebalm

This species grows throughout the Eastern U.S. and into Canada. For best landscape performance, be cautious and purchase plants that are Florida native ecotypes.

**CAUTION**





1–3 ft
Nectar



Silver-leaved aster

Silver-leaved aster (*Pityopsis graminifolia*), also known as Grass-leaved goldenaster or Narrowleaf silkgrass, is found throughout Florida in scrub, sandhills and flatwoods ecosystems.

The species has five varieties, two or more of which may be offered by native nurseries. Tracy's silver-leaved aster (*Pityopsis graminifolia* var. *tracyi*) can be found in all of the habitats, though mostly in flatwoods. It makes a short silvery groundcover and can often be seen on upper slopes of many roadsides. Sandhill silver-leaved aster (*P. graminifolia* var. *aequifolia*) is usually only found on drier soils of sandhills and scrub. It blooms later than most other fall wildflowers, providing color into late fall and early winter.

## Description

Silver-leaved aster is a fitting name, as the leaves are covered with silky hairs that give it a silvery look. At first glance, the plant may appear to be a grass. It is a perennial with short or long rhizomes, depending on the variety, and is less than a foot tall until the fall, when it sends up bloom stalks on stems up to 3 feet tall. Its yellow aster-like flowers can bloom into November and December, and even later farther south.

Tracy's silver-leaved aster spreads from rhizomes to make a dense groundcover and has flowers over 1 inch across on the tips of branched stems with short, appressed leaves. This variety, with its ability to spread, can make a very pleasing silvery grass-like groundcover over time. Sandhill silver-leaved aster



Flower flies on Silver-leaved aster

grows as a single clump with smaller flowers on the tips of stems that have longer spreading leaves all the way to the top. It can be mixed with other wildflowers that offer a variety of color and bloom times.

## Butterflies and bees

Silver-leaved aster attracts butterflies and various pollinators as a nectar plant.

## Planting

Though some varieties will spread, *Pityopsis* does not reseed as readily as do wildflowers such as *Coreopsis* and Spotted beebalm. Silver-leaved aster is relatively easy to establish and maintain over time, especially if it is one of the spreading varieties. The more rhizomatous varieties can also be divided and planted in new areas.

Plants can be established at any time of the year from containers by watering in well after planting and following with water as needed until established or well into the rainy season. Space them 2 feet apart — closer if using Tracy's silver-leaved aster to create a groundcover quickly by spreading.

## Seeds

Collect the seed heads once the head has completed flowering and the seed has fluffed out. Seeds may need to be sown rather soon in the winter months, because they aren't viable for long.

## Plants

Plants are generally available in quarts or gallons from native nurseries.

## Care

After the plants have bloomed, cut back the flowering stems to ground level. You can even mow in areas where Tracy's silver-leaved aster has been used to make a spreading groundcover. Use well-sharpened blades, as the stems and leaves are quite tough.

## Site conditions

The plant prefers full sun to light shade and well-drained soils to droughty sandy soils. Avoid heavily shaded or crowded plantings. Different varieties may require different growing conditions; ask about the plant's origins.

## Hardiness zones

Silver-leaved aster is best suited for zones 8A–11.



Silver-leaved aster in a landscape setting

The different varieties of Silver-leaved aster are not well known, even by native growers, so ask about the growth characteristics when you purchase plants or obtain plant material from a friend.

**CAUTION**



Little metalmark on Black-eyed Susan

*Rudbeckia* species are commonly known as Black-eyed Susans or coneflowers. The most widely available native is Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*). It is found throughout Florida in sandhills, flatwoods and disturbed areas, including the variety *Rudbeckia hirta* var. *floridana*, endemic to Central and South Florida.

Softhair coneflower (*R. mollis*) and Cutleaf coneflower (*R. laciniata*) can be used successfully throughout the Panhandle and in North and Central Florida.

## Butterflies and bees

These plants are excellent nectar sources and are also larval hosts to some moths.

## Description

Black-eyed Susan, especially the variety found in Central and South Florida, appears to be perennial. However, varieties may be annual, biennial or perennial. Plants are generally 1 to 2 feet tall with most of the foliage on the bottom half. Leaves are very rough to the touch (which can help identify young plants). The 3- to 4-inch deep-yellow aster-like flowers have dark brown disk flowers in a central dome. *Rudbeckia* blooms spring through fall, and has scattered blooms through the winter in South Florida.

Softhair coneflower is annual or biennial, with soft, almost velvety hairs on plants that reach 3 feet or more when flowering. The 2½-inch flowerheads are similar to Black-eyed Susan. They have showy ray florets, but the disk is flattened and brown or purplish. Softhair coneflower is a robust plant that can have 30 flowers

open at a time from late spring through summer. It naturally occurs in sandhills and open hammocks, so plant it in sandy, well-drained soils, and mix it with other species where its height is a welcome addition to the landscape.

Cutleaf coneflower is a large perennial reaching 4 to 6 feet tall and up to 4 feet across when in full bloom in late summer and fall. Found in moist, open hammocks and floodplains of North Florida, it prefers moist settings and may need a little more shade or protection from the west sun when used in Central Florida. The lower leaves are toothed and deeply dissected. The large flowers stand 2 to 4 feet above the last leaves and have long yellow ray florets spreading from the mounding disk with greenish yellow florets. Cutleaf coneflower's very beautiful rosette of large, rich green leaves can be seen through much of the year, making a fine mass planting.

## Planting

Use Black-eyed Susans in mixed wildflower beds. This and most other *Rudbeckia* species easily self-seed if open or lightly mulched areas are available.

Space Black-eyed Susans and Softhair coneflower 14 to 18 inches apart. Space Cutleaf coneflower about 3 feet apart.

## Seeds

Seeds can be collected after the ray and disk flowers finish blooming and have dried slightly. Pick a head and tear it apart to find the mature cone-shaped seeds, which should have solid white centers. Seeds can be purchased commercially.



Black-eyed Susan

## Plants

Plants are available in gallon containers from native nurseries. When buying at mainstream retail outlets, be sure to ask about the origin of the plant (see Caution).

## Care

Monitor plants during extra-long dry periods, especially in spring, and water deeply only as needed. Black-eyed Susan flowers can be cut after they bloom to encourage more flowering stems and lengthen the bloom period.

## Site conditions

This plant does well in many soil types as long as the site is well-drained and not extremely dry. Give *Rudbeckia* full sun or partial shade for the best blooming.

## Hardiness zones

Black-eyed Susan is best suited for zones 8A–11. Softhair and Cutleaf coneflower are suited for zones 8A–9A.



Softhair coneflower

There are many named cultivars of *Rudbeckia* species, and some are quite popular and widely available.

None of the cultivars currently available were derived from Florida ecotypes, and they are not considered native wildflowers. They may not perform as well or live as long as those from your local region.

**CAUTION**



Wild petunia

Photo by Ron and Diane Bynum



Gulf fritillary on Wild petunia

Photo by Kathy Loflin

Wild petunia (*Ruellia caroliniensis*) is an easy-to-grow, lavender- to blue-flowered native that works well in most conditions. It is endemic to the eastern United States, where its range extends from New Jersey southward and west to Texas. In Florida, it is found in sandhills, flatwoods and moist to wet hammocks in about 52 counties. There are five species of *Ruellia* native to Florida, but *R. caroliniensis* is the most common, both in the wild and commercially. Other species include Ciliate wild petunia (*Ruellia ciliosa*) and Thicket wild petunia (*Ruellia succulenta*), endemic to South Florida. A non-native species of *Ruellia* is commonly available for purchase but should not be used as it is invasive. (See Caution.)

## Description

Wild petunia is a long-lived perennial that can attain a height of 12 to 18 inches. Its 5-petaled blooms are tubular, grow to about 1 to 2 inches, and appear in clusters along multi-branched stems. It resembles the common garden petunia, although they are not related. Its simple leaves are green with an ovate to elliptic shape and are oppositely arranged on stems. *R. caroliniensis* is easily distinguished from other *Ruellia* species by the long, pointed sepals and bracts that surround the flower's base.

## Butterflies and bees

Several butterfly species, including the White peacock, Malachite and Mangrove buckeye, gather nectar from Wild petunia. It is a host for the Common buckeye. The blue corollas attract a variety of bees, including bumble bees, leafcutter bees and honey bees.

Wild petunia's showy flowers last only a day, but successional blooms keep the plant looking fresh with continuous flowers spring through fall. In warmer parts of the state, it may bloom year-round with smaller flowers. In colder climates, Wild petunia may die back in winter and return in spring.

## Planting

Wild petunia does well in a mixed wildflower bed of plants and grasses. In North Florida, it is not recommended for a mass planting as it will be a patch of stems during the winter.

Plant Wild petunia 12 to 15 inches apart, or grow it in a hanging basket or large, well-drained container. Wild petunia is one of the few wildflowers that will bloom in partial to slightly denser shade.

## Seeds

Seeds are generally not commercially available. To grow this plant from seed, collect mature capsules in a paper bag in mid- to late summer. Seeds gradually ripen on the plant over a period of weeks, so visit plants several times to check the capsules. They will turn from bright green to brown when mature.

## Plants

Plants are widely available from native nurseries in various pot sizes, and can be planted throughout the growing season.

Stem cuttings are also an easy way to propagate it. Take 3- to 4-inch cuttings in the summer from flexible stems. Plants root easily in 3-4 weeks.

## Care

Wild petunia may need trimming halfway through its growing season to promote

new growth and blooms. Remove 3-4 internodes (4-6 inches) with scissors or clippers. Annual pruning may be required to remove old stems.

Wild petunia is a prolific self-seeder and may form colonies over time. (Like other members of the Acanthaceae family, its mature seed capsules will explode open, sending seeds far from the parent plant.) Plants have a strong root system, making them easy to transplant.

## Site conditions

This plant adapts well to varied sun and soil moisture conditions. It will thrive in a moderate-to-dry sunny location but also tolerates shade and even wet, mucky soils. Establishing Wild petunia in shadier locations will result in plants that appear lanky with fewer blooms. Plants have some salt tolerance.

## Hardiness zones

Wild petunia is best suited for zones 8A–10B.



Wild petunia is best in a mixed planting.

Photo by Mary Ellen Gotte

Although the nursery industry offers some sterile non-native *Ruellia*, the widely grown Mexican petunia (*Ruellia simplex*; synonyms *R. brittoniana* and *R. tweediana*) should be avoided as it may reproduce via underground rhizomes. As a Category I invasive exotic species, it has spread into municipal and natural areas, displacing native species and changing community structures or ecological functions.

**CAUTION**

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☀️ ☁️
💧
6–36 in
Nectar



Photo by Martha Stewart

*Salvia coccinea*

Florida gardeners will generally find three native *Salvia* species available. Scarlet or Tropical sage (*Salvia coccinea*) is the most commonly available and occurs throughout the state (with the exception of the Keys) in areas with moist, well-drained soils. Lyreleaf sage (*Salvia lyrata*) occurs throughout Florida south to Broward and Lee counties in moist soils at woodland edges or in open areas. Creeping or Southern river sage (*Salvia misella*) occurs in moist semi-shaded woodlands from Alachua County south through Miami-Dade and Monroe counties. All are nectar sources for butterflies.

*Salvia* has a long history of medicinal uses. Crush the foliage, and you'll detect a faint herbal fragrance.

## Description

Scarlet sage is a short-lived perennial that persists in the landscape by self-seeding. It generally reaches 18 to 36 inches in height and is taller than it is wide. Blooming occurs throughout the year in South Florida, and summer through fall in Central and North Florida. The abundant blooms are 1-inch long and usually deep coral or fire-engine red, although pink and white forms occur as well. The plant's square stems are green to dark brown.

Lyreleaf sage is a perennial that, for much of the year, consists of relatively flat,



Photo by Jeff Vercini

*Salvia lyrata*

variegated leaves that display a range of green, dark violet and chocolate brown. Light violet-colored flowers appear on deep-green or burgundy-colored stems in late winter or early spring. Stems reach 12 to 24 inches or taller, depending on available moisture, nutrients and light.

Creeping sage is a low-growing evergreen groundcover 6 to 8 inches high. Blooming occurs off and on throughout the year, with tiny, abundant blue flowers. The blooms are not noticeable from a distance, but the light-green foliage is very attractive. Plants creep out from a main central stem.

## Planting

Use Scarlet sage in the mid-portion of a mixed wildflower bed or as an accent by itself. Space plants 1 to 2 feet apart and resist the urge to plant in masses — they self-seed readily and will spread throughout the garden.

Plant Lyreleaf sage in small clusters, with individual plants about a foot apart. Some growers have successfully established it as a spreading groundcover after two or three years of cultivation in a landscape.

Creeping sage is a good choice for tight areas and under trees, where it can be planted in pockets between roots. It tolerates light foot traffic. Space plants 6 to 8 inches apart.

## Seeds

Scarlet and Lyreleaf sage are easily grown from seed. To collect your own, allow flowers to dry on stems and gently shake them into a container to remove flowers and obtain seed.

## Plants

Plants are available in 4-inch to 1-gallon containers.

## Care

For continuous blooming, cut Scarlet sage plants back after flowers are spent for continuous blooming. Lyreleaf sage can be mowed in late spring or early summer, after it seeds. Creeping sage can be clipped once or twice in the summer. Lyreleaf and Creeping sage may need water if planted in full sun or during extended drought.

## Site conditions

Scarlet sage does best in moist, well-drained sandy soils with full sun to scattered shade. It can tolerate some salt spray.

Lyreleaf sage prefers moist ground and partial shade, but will tolerate full sun.

Creeping sage does well in bright shade and prefers moist soils. It will tolerate full sun but may become stressed in hot and cold weather.

## Hardiness zones

*Salvia* species are best suited for zones 8A–10B.



Photo by Bruce Turley

Border planting of Creeping sage

## Butterflies and bees

*Salvias* are excellent nectar sources for butterflies and bumblebees. Hummingbirds are attracted to them, too.

Many non-native sages are sold in garden centers and other large retail outlets, with minimal identification.

**CAUTION**



1–2 ft

Nectar



Helmet skullcap



Hairstreak on Helmet skullcap

For such a diminutive wildflower, Helmet skullcap (*Scutellaria integrifolia*) makes a large impact when it blooms in late spring and summer. Also known as Common skullcap, it is ideal for a wildflower border or nestled within a pond or rock garden. Although a short-lived perennial, its adaptability is contributing to its surge in popularity with home gardeners.

*Scutellaria* is Latin for dish, possibly describing the lower plate-like petal; and *integrifolia* refers to its smooth leaf margins.

The natural distribution of *Scutellaria* extends to all of Florida except the southernmost tip. It is frequently found in the Panhandle, and in North and Central Florida in the moist soils of sandhills, pine flatwoods and upland mixed forests, as well as along marsh and swamp edges. Skullcap is also found through most of the eastern U.S.

A closely related species, Florida scrub skullcap (*Scutellaria arenicola*) can be distinguished by its crenate leaf margins. The other nine native Florida skullcap species are only rarely or occasionally found in their habitats.

## Description

Helmet skullcap is a 12- to 24-inch perennial that dies back in winter. It begins as a basal rosette of bright green, arrow-shaped leaves with coarsely toothed margins. From the rosette, many branched stems emerge. Stem leaves vary from elliptical to arrow-shaped and are oppositely arranged. Upper leaves are more narrow and have entire margins.

Flowers are two-lipped and resemble snapdragon blooms. They occur on terminal racemes and are very showy with colors ranging from sky blue to violet. The

lower lip consists of three fused lobes with white splotched centers extending down the throat. A dark strip guides insects toward desirable nectar. Upper petals are fused and curved, forming a small hood or helmet-like structure. Flowers are born in the axils of the bract-like upper leaves.

## Butterflies and bees

Helmet skullcap flowers are visited by a wide range of bees whose bodies can fit between the lower and upper lips in order to reach the nectar. This includes leafcutter, carder and cuckoo bees, as well as some bumble bees. Sweat bees are also known to visit Helmet skullcap, but they are nectar robbers and will pierce the base of the corolla to access nectar. Like many other species in the Lamiaceae (mint) family, Helmet skullcap flowers are only visited sporadically by butterflies. Species known to utilize Helmet skullcap include Gulf fritillary, Spicebush swallowtail and Eastern black swallowtail.

## Planting

This lovely little wildflower can be introduced into your garden anytime using plants or seeds. It produces a large amount of seeds and seedlings, so plantings will naturally and quickly increase in size.

## Seeds

Seeds are small, shiny and black and are produced in nutlets. They are currently not available commercially. Seeds are mature when the nutlet coat turns light

brown and becomes papery. The plant may hold flowers and seeds at the same time. Dried seeds can be stored up to six months then sown when temperatures reach 70 degrees. Germination may take up to 30 days.

## Plants

Nurseries that specialize in native plants sell Helmet skullcap almost year-round. It is generally available in 4-inch or 1-gallon pots.

## Care

Excess seedlings can be easily removed or transplanted into small pots. To avoid having to weed out seedlings, prune plants back after flowering to limit seed production. Disease and pests are not a problem with this wildflower.

## Site conditions

Prized for its early spring flowering, Helmet skullcap is great in the front of a mixed wildflower bed. This adaptable plant can be used in well-drained to moist soil and is reported to be somewhat drought tolerant. A pH of 5-6.5 is ideal. It is best suited to sunny or lightly shaded sites. Plants will be dormant in winter, dying back to the rootstock. Helmet skullcap is not salt tolerant.

## Hardiness zones

Helmet skullcap is best suited for zones 8A–9B.



Gulf fritillary on Helmet skullcap



Privet senna



Chapman's senna

*Senna* is a genus of diverse flowering plants native throughout the tropics. Four species are native to Florida, and two — *S. ligustrina* and *S. mexicana* var. *chapmanii* — are commercially propagated. Both are great for attracting pollinators and adding a touch of the tropics to the home landscape.

*Senna mexicana* var. *chapmanii* is known commonly as Chapman's wild sensitive plant, Chapman's senna and Bahama senna. It occurs in pine rocklands, coastal strands and along hammock edges in Miami-Dade County and the Florida Keys. However, it can be planted in landscapes as far north as Central Florida. Due to its limited natural range, it is a state-listed threatened species.

Privet wild sensitive plant or Privet senna (*S. ligustrina*) naturally occurs in coastal counties from Brevard south on the east coast, and from Gilchrist and Levy south on the west coast. It can be found along hammock edges and in disturbed areas.

## Description

With an abundance of showy yellow flowers and gleaming evergreen foliage, both Privet and Chapman's senna make exceptional ornamental plants. Chapman's senna is a robust evergreen perennial that can take on a variety of shapes — from upright to nearly prostrate and sprawling. Its flowers have bright, buttery-yellow petals with subtle red venation. They are born on stalked clusters in spring and fall.

Privet senna is a fast-growing shrub that can reach a height of 10 feet or more. It is lanky, with a thin crown and many short side branches. If allowed to self-sow, it may form a dense colony. At maturity, Privet senna tends to bend under its own weight. Its flowers are lemon yellow. Its

foliage is similar to that of Chapman's senna, with pinnately compound leaves that are alternately arranged, but its leaflets are linear- to lance-shaped and more numerous. Overall, its foliage is less dense. Privet Senna typically blooms from autumn to late spring but may bloom sporadically throughout the year.

## Butterflies and bees

*Senna* flowers are visited by sweat, resin, cuckoo, leafcutter and bumble bees for their pollen and nectar. Butterflies such as the Sleepy orange, Little yellow, and Cloudless, Orange-barred and Statira sulphurs are also frequent visitors. All members of the *Senna* genus are larval host plants for sulphur caterpillars.

## Planting

Both species may be used as specimen shrubs, but Chapman's senna works best planted in mass and as a border.

## Seeds

Senna seeds usually aren't available commercially. Both species are prolific self-seeders. Seeds typically sprout in spring.

## Plants

Plants of both species are available in 1- and 3-gallon pots at native plant nurseries.

## Care

Sennas are not cold tolerant and may die if exposed to below-freezing temperatures. Seedlings are slightly more resilient and may survive. Sennas require occasional pruning; otherwise, they

can become leggy. Removal of brown seed pods will help the plants remain attractive when not in flower and will help decrease seedlings. Unwanted seedlings can easily be removed.

## Site conditions

Plant Privet senna and Chapman's senna in dry to slightly moist, well-drained soils. Both can tolerate nutrient-poor soils but do better with some organic content. Full sun to light shade is best for both species. Privet senna can tolerate a little more shade than Chapman's — up to half a day — but neither will flower without several hours of daily direct sunlight. Despite being native to coastal areas, Privet senna is not salt tolerant, although Chapman's senna is.

## Hardiness zones

Privet senna is suited for zones 9A–11; Chapman's senna for zones 10A–11.



Cloudless sulphur caterpillar on Privet senna

Many non-native *Senna* species are sold commercially. In particular, Christmas senna or Butterfly senna (*S. pendula*) is often recommended for butterfly gardens. However, the Florida Invasive Species Council (FISC) lists it as a Category I invasive species, known to alter native plant communities. It should be avoided. For more information on Butterfly senna, visit the FISC website: [www.FloridaInvasiveSpecies.org](http://www.FloridaInvasiveSpecies.org).

**CAUTION**





3–6 ft
Nectar



Starry rosinweed

Photo by Sarah Klefer



Bigleaf rosinweed

Photo by Eleanor Dietrich

Florida has two native *Silphium* species, both with robust foliage and flowers. The traditional common name for these plants is rosinweed. New common names were adopted recently to eliminate any misconception that these beautiful plants are weeds. Starry rosinweed (*Silphium astericus*) occurs in flatwoods, sandhills and disturbed areas in the Panhandle and the western central peninsula south to Lee County. Bigleaf rosinweed (*Silphium compositum*) occurs in flatwoods in the Panhandle and northern counties south to Pasco County.

Rosinweed stems contain a gummy or resinous substance. Native Americans chewed stems to clean their teeth. Cherokees also used the plants medicinally.

## Description

Starry rosinweed is a perennial that may die back in the winter, particularly if cold. It sports new foliage in the spring and can produce flowers from mid-spring through early fall, and even through winter if temperatures are mild. The flowering stems can reach 3 to 5 feet, with plants about 2 feet across. The lance-shaped, toothed leaves occur throughout the stem to the flowering scapes, where the stems branch to support many flowering heads. The 2-inch flowerheads have yellow ray petals and disks. This species is especially loved, because it blooms over a long period of time.

Bigleaf rosinweed is also a perennial, but does die back in the winter. It emerges in spring with very unique basal leaves — they are almost round, deeply dissected, dark green, red-veined and 4 to 12 inches across. The flowering stems can reach 6 feet and have a few tiny leaves scattered up the stem, which branches near the

top. Flowers are slightly smaller than Starry rosinweed, with yellow ray petals surrounding reddish disks, and bloom toward the end of summer. Because the stems are not leafy and have flowers only at the top, place plants where the beautiful basal foliage can also be appreciated.

## Planting

Space plants about 2 feet apart. Because both species can tolerate some drought, water deeply and thoroughly to wet the soil at least 7 inches down until the plant is established, but only as often as needed. As perennials, both species persist in the landscape and can reseed on their own.

## Butterflies and bees

Both species are good attractors of butterflies, native bees and other pollinators. Birds will eat the seeds.

## Seeds

Starry rosinweed seeds are commercially available; you also can collect your own when flowerheads are dry. Break them apart to separate the seeds. For best results, plant seeds shortly after collection and keep the soil surface moist. Germination occurs in about 3 weeks. For faster germination, cold-stratify seeds by keeping them moist and refrigerated in planting media for 30 days. They will begin to sprout in 4 days and complete germination in 2 weeks.

## Plants

Both species can be found in nurseries in 1-gallon containers, but Bigleaf rosinweed is not widely available.

## Care

When established in the right soil, plants should not need extra water, but watch for extra-long droughts, especially in the spring, and water as needed. Plants can be cut back after flowering if desired. On Starry rosinweed, cut the flowering portion only, leaving the leafy stems. Cut back Bigleaf rosinweed to its basal leaves.

## Site conditions

Although the natural range of Starry rosinweed is the west side of the peninsula, it performs well through much of the state. It is fairly drought-resistant, and also does well in moist soils. Full sun to partial shade is needed for good flowering.

Bigleaf rosinweed is even more drought tolerant than Starry rosinweed and does well in dry, sandy soils. It also tolerates moist, well-drained soils, but may grow taller under those conditions. Full sun is needed for best flowering.

## Hardiness zones

Starry rosinweed and Bigleaf rosinweed are suited for zones 8A–10B.



Starry rosinweed

Photo by Nancy Bissett

Since both species of *Silphium* occur north to the Mid-Atlantic states, it is important to purchase plants that were propagated from Florida progeny for best performance.





3–4 ft

Nectar



Photo by Neilson DeBarros, USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database

Seaside goldenrod

Seaside goldenrod (*Solidago sempervirens*) is generally the most available of the four native goldenrods that are grown commercially. This plant blooms in very showy masses on dunes, in swales and brackish marshes, on sandy soils in coastal areas, and occasionally inland throughout the state, except for the Keys.

Goldenrod is often mistakenly blamed for triggering allergies, but it is ragweed, which blooms heavily around the same time, that is to blame.

Goldenrods have been used medicinally since Roman times or earlier. Seaside goldenrod was used by the Seminoles to treat wounds.

## Description

Seaside goldenrod has golden-yellow tubular blooms that densely cover the long wand-like inflorescences on the tips of the stem in summer and fall in most of the state, and also in the spring in South Florida. This perennial retains its long strap-shaped, somewhat-fleshy basal leaves year-round. Leaves gradually become smaller as they ascend stems. Plants are 4- to 6-feet tall in flower and spread by rhizomes to make large colonies over time. Plant it where it can make a big show in the garden, or allow it a large space in the landscape.

## Planting

Because of its large size, space plants 3 feet or more apart and allow to fill in over time. It spreads by rhizomes to make dense stands with stout stems and is easy to retain in the landscape.



Photo by Mary Keim

Bees on goldenrod

## Seeds

Collect seeds after flowers are spent and fluffy tufts of hairs occur. These are called “pappus” and are attached to the end of seeds. Seeds also are available commercially.

## Plants

Plants are available in quart, 1-gallon and 3-gallon containers. It can be propagated using division.

## Butterflies and bees

A variety of butterflies and other pollinators are attracted to goldenrod as a nectar plant. The plants also attract birds searching for insects.

## Care

This plant performs best in harsh conditions with no watering after establishment. To reduce height, cut back plants in mid-summer before blooms start to form, and cut back to basal rosettes after blooming. There is no need for cold protection. Seaside goldenrod also is fairly disease-free.

## Site conditions

This plant needs lots of sun to bloom prolifically, but it will tolerate some shade. Although it can occur in moist to wet areas naturally, it is important to plant it in sandy, well-drained soils for best performance in landscapes. This keeps its height in check, keeps plants from falling over or needing staking, and produces more showy blooms. Seaside goldenrod is salt tolerant.

## Hardiness zones

Seaside goldenrod is best suited for zones 8A–11.

## Other species

Wand goldenrod (*Solidago stricta*) blooms in the fall with lavender blazing stars in wetter flatwoods and prairie communities throughout Florida. It has the same slender wand appearance of the blazing star, but its flowers are golden yellow. This 2- to 4-foot perennial has small basal leaves and very small appressed leaves on its flowering stems, which die back after seeds mature.

Pinebarren goldenrod (*Solidago fistulosa*) is Florida’s most common goldenrod, found on disturbed sites and in pine flatwoods, wetter soils, and dry upland habitats throughout Florida. The panicles of its golden flowering heads are found on the ends of stems reaching 3 to 5 feet. It spreads through rhizomes to cover large areas, so it should be carefully placed in the landscape.

Chapman’s goldenrod (*Solidago odora* var. *chapmanii*) likes the dry sandy soils of sandhills and open hammocks in the peninsula and a few areas in the central Panhandle. It does not spread by rhizomes, and is a relatively slender branching plant that reaches 3 to 4 feet tall — shorter than most other species. Its typical golden flowers bloom in late summer to early fall and are found on the tips of downward-bending branches.



Photo by Ryan Brown

Pinebarren goldenrod

● ●
☀ ☁
💧
4–5 ft
Nectar



Monarch butterfly on Elliott's aster

With a bounty of beautiful blooms, there is no better genus of wildflowers than aster (*Symphyotrichum* spp.) for attracting pollinators to your landscape.

Of the 26 aster species native to Florida, several are well-suited for landscape use. Climbing aster (*S. carolinianum*) is a sprawling, vinelike shrub. It occurs naturally in coastal hammocks, wet flatwoods and along the edges of swamps, springs and streams. Elliott's aster (*S. elliotii*) is an erect, multi-branched herbaceous perennial that occurs in wet flatwoods, swamps and freshwater marshes. Both species can be found nearly throughout the peninsula and into the eastern Panhandle, although Climbing aster has a slightly greater distribution.

As fall- and winter-flowering species, Climbing aster and Elliott's aster help extend the options for nectar and pollen available to pollinators. Climbing aster is one of the few wildflowers that will bloom in December.

## Description

Climbing aster's limbs can extend to 8 feet or more. Flowers are 1 to 2 inches in diameter and have a very sweet fragrance. They have dense centers of yellow-orange disk florets. Ray florets vary in color from lavender to purplish-pink to violet. Leaves are grayish-green and elliptical to ovate with entire margins. Climbing aster blooms in the fall and continues into January; it may bloom year-round in favorable conditions.

Elliott's aster can grow to 4 or 5 feet tall. Its flowers are about 1 inch in diameter with pale, lavender ray florets surrounding a center of yellow-orange disk florets. Flowers are born in dense, crownlike clusters. Leaves are shiny and elliptical



Climbing aster flowers and flower buds

to lance-shaped with toothed margins. Elliott's aster typically blooms in late fall and will die back in winter.

## Planting

The sprawling nature of Climbing aster makes it suitable for growing along a trellis or fence. Elliott's aster is best for a naturalistic planting, and must be frequently maintained in a more formal setting. Both are prolific self-seeders. Elliott's aster will also spread by suckering.

## Butterflies and bees

The flowers draw honey bees and myriad native bees, including polyester, sweat, cuckoo, leafcutter, mining, bumble and miner bees. Butterflies and moths also love them: Monarchs, Pearl crescents, skippers, fritillaries, Common buckeyes, Gray hairstreaks, swallowtails and sulphurs have been known to frequent the flowers for nectar.

## Seeds

Elliott's aster seeds are available commercially. Sow in fall.

## Plants

Climbing aster is generally available from native plant nurseries. Elliott's aster is becoming more available.

## Care

Cut back Climbing aster in late winter after flowering to encourage future blooms and healthy growth. Elliott's aster can sucker and form dense colonies. Suckers can be removed, but must be tended to throughout the growing

season to keep them from outcompeting other species. Both species can be problematic in formal landscapes as they can take on a tangled or chaotic appearance; however, they can be pruned to any shape and also perform well as a hedge.

## Site conditions

Both Elliott's and Climbing aster prefer sandy, loamy or organic soils that are moist, although they can tolerate moderately dry soils. Plant in full sun to partial shade. Neither is salt tolerant.

## Hardiness zones

Climbing aster and Elliott's aster are suited for zones 8A–11.

## Other species

Other species of *Symphyotrichum* may be available from native nurseries. Rice button aster (*S. dumosum*) grows 2-3 feet tall and produces small, whitish-lavender flowers. It suckers in single stalks. Georgia aster (*S. georgianum*) has cornflower blue to purple ray florets and contrasting white anthers. It requires a bit more moisture and sun than *S. elliotii* or *S. carolinianum*.

Eastern silver aster (*S. concolor*) is an upland species that is very drought tolerant. Its flowers are deep violet and born in fall on the ends of long stalks. It gets its name from its silvery-green foliage. Walter's aster (*S. walteri*) is an upland species that prefers dry, well-drained soils. Its flowers are smaller and have fewer ray florets and more distinct disk florets. It should not be planted south of Central Florida.



Barred yellow sulphur on Climbing aster

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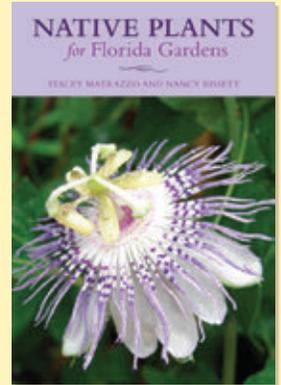


## Resources

### *Native Plants for Florida Gardens*

(216 pages, \$21.95)

Learn about 100 Florida native wildflowers, grasses, shrubs, vines and trees that can transform typical Florida landscapes! This book, from the Florida Wildflower Foundation, features inspirational photos, tips on care and landscape use, and much more.



Preview and purchase your copy at [www.FlaWildflowers.org/shop](http://www.FlaWildflowers.org/shop).

### Visit [www.FlaWildflowers.org](http://www.FlaWildflowers.org) to:

- Learn more about selecting and planting wildflowers.
- Download handouts to help with plant selection, growing and maintenance.
- Read informative articles on attracting pollinators to your landscape.

### Other resources

- [www.PlantRealFlorida.org](http://www.PlantRealFlorida.org)
- [www.FloridaWildflowers.com](http://www.FloridaWildflowers.com)
- [www.FNPS.org](http://www.FNPS.org)
- [www.RegionalConservation.org/beta/nfyn/default.asp](http://www.RegionalConservation.org/beta/nfyn/default.asp)

### USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map



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