



FLORIDA
WILDFLOWER
FOUNDATION

planting and care of Blanketflower in landscapes

Photo by Greg Kuczyk

About this species



Photo by Jeff Norcini

Blanketflower (*Gaillardia pulchella*), also known as Firewheel and Indian Blanket, is one of two *Gaillardia* species native to Florida, the other species being Lanceleaf Blanketflower (*G. aestivalis*). Blanketflower occurs throughout Florida in coastal areas and disturbed sites.

Description

In Florida, Blanketflower is an annual or short-lived perennial. Its linear- to lance-shaped leaves are quite hairy, which makes the plant appear grayish-green. Under natural conditions, it's from 12 to 18 inches tall and about as wide. In gardens, it can easily spread twice that.

Its brightly colored flowers, long blooming season and drought tolerance make this a popular garden plant. Flower petals typically are bi-colored with an inner red band surrounded by an outer yellow band. The relative amounts of red and yellow can vary considerably. Petals can

be entirely red or yellow, have an inner red band surrounded by a white band, or, on rare occasions, be entirely white. Sometimes the petals even are tubular — narrow at the base and flaring out like trumpets.

Peak flowering is from mid-spring to late summer, with diminished flowering until frost; in Central and South Florida, Blanketflower can bloom at any time of the year.

Use Blanketflower in landscape sites where it can be allowed to spread, as it can be a very aggressive re-seeder, especially in loamy soils.

Blanketflower is an excellent nectar plant for butterflies and pollinators. Its “tough as nails” reputation is well deserved. If you have an open, sandy, sunny spot where nothing grows, try Blanketflower.



Photos by Jeff Norcini



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Planting

Blanketflower easily sustains itself through re-seeding. To ensure seed set, several to many plants should be in close proximity so bees and other insect pollinators can cross-pollinate flowers. Plantings can be established by seed or plants.

Seeds

Blanketflower seeds are commercially available. Sow in early to mid-fall on an untilled seed bed.

Plants

Containerized plants often are sold in 4-inch, quart and gallon containers. For a dense planting, space plants about 12 to 18 inches apart, on center.

Care

Established plants are drought tolerant, so supplemental watering might be needed only during extended dry periods. When irrigating, apply $\frac{1}{3}$ - to $\frac{1}{2}$ - inch of water.

In late fall, plants that have not died can be cut back to 6 to 8 inches of stubble. No cold protection is needed during winter; even the tiniest seedlings tolerate frost and freezes into the low 20s.

Blanketflower is relatively pest- and disease-free. When viewing leaves closely, you may notice tiny white speckles, which horticulturists often refer to as stippling. Whatever the cause, stippling does not appear to be detrimental to the Blanketflower's overall health.



Gaillardia seedlings at 22 days



Gaillardia seedlings at 2-3 months

Site Conditions

Blanketflower is salt tolerant and grows best in full sun in dry to slightly dry, well-drained soil. In shadier sites, it gets very leggy and can even creep into adjacent shrubs. Once established, Blanketflower is very tolerant of hot, dry conditions, especially in very sandy soils. Drought tolerance may be diminished in heavier soils.



Photo by John Moran

CAUTION

Varieties sold at many large retail outlets and garden centers, and by national wildflower seed companies, often are non-native *Gaillardia aristata* or one of the many varieties of *Gaillardia pulchella* or *Gaillardia x grandiflora* (a hybrid of *G. pulchella* and *G. aristata*). Avoid planting these in the vicinity of *Gaillardia pulchella*, as they may hybridize.