20 EASY-TO-GROW Wildflowers
Selection
It may take a while to understand your landscape’s soil and drainage conditions. 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.

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, you can 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 so 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.

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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; Blanketflower (Gaillardia pulchella) by Dara Dobson; and Monarch with Pink milkweed (Asclepias incarnata) by Peg Urban.
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. rolffii), 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 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.

Seeds can be stored in the refrigerator for a couple of months. Germinate them on top of the soil with a light mix barely covering the seeds. Once sprouted, 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.

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.

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.
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 occurs 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.”

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 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.
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 spring 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 in 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 along coastal counties in the central and southern peninsula on scrubby sites. 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.

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
Conradina 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. Plants are readily available from nurseries specializing in native plants.

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 zones 9a–9b. C. canescens is best for 8a-9b.

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.
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 roadides and in disturbed areas, flatwoods and prairies.

**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.

**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. 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.

**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.

**Butterflies and bees**

*Coreopsis* is a great nectar plant for butterflies and pollinators. It also has been used to make tea and for treating various medical ailments.

**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.

**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.
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.

**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.

**Planting**

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.

**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.

**Seeds**

Seeds are not available commercially at this time.

**Plants**

Twinflower is often available at nurseries that specialize in native plants. Plants should be installed 18 to 24 inches apart as they spread quickly. To propagate, take stem cuttings or divide clumps in summer.

**Care**

In winter, plants are semi-dormant and can be trimmed or mowed 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 calcareous 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-sewn 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 best suited for zones 8a–10b.

**Other species**

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 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 makes an excellent groundcover.**
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 is from 12 to 18 inches tall and about as wide. In gardens, it can easily spread to 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.

**Planting**

Plantings can be established by seed or plants. Use it in landscape sites where it can be allowed to spread, as it can be a very aggressive re-seeder, especially in loamy soils. To ensure seed set, several to many plants should be in close proximity so bees and other insect pollinators can cross-pollinate flowers.

**Seeds**

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

**Plants**

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

**Butterflies and bees**

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.

**Care**

Established plants are drought tolerant, so supplemental watering might be needed only during extended dry periods. When irrigating, apply 1/3- to 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 refer to as stippling. Whatever the cause, stippling does not appear to be detrimental to a plant’s overall health.

**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.

**Hardiness zones**

Blanketflower is best suited for zones 8a–11.

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 G. pulchella or Gaillardia x grandiflora (a hybrid of G. pulchella and G. aristata). Avoid planting these in the vicinity of native ecotype G. pulchella, as they may hybridize.
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 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 frillillaries, 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

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

### 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 9a–11, while Tampa verbena is better for zones 9a–10b.

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

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.

Hardiness zones

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

Butterflies and bees

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

Other species

Narrowleaf sunflower (Helianthus angustifolius) also may 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.

Narrowleaf sunflower’s 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 them 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 (Helianthus radula) and Lakeside sunflower (Helianthus 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 sunflower in zones 8a–9b, and Lakeside sunflower in zones 8a–9a.

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

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Thirty-one species of St. John’s wort (Hypericum) 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.

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.

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.

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
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.

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 wetland species moist by adding them 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.
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. tenuifolia* var. *quadriflora*) and Graceful blazing star (*L. gracilis*). These species are found throughout Florida. Evergreen blazing star can also be used in the Keys.

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.

**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.**

**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.

**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 and Graceful blazing star are found in habitats where soil is very well-drained, deep sand. 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.

**Hardiness zones**

Chapman’s blazing star, Dense blazing star and Graceful blazing star can be grown in Zones 8a–11a. Use Evergreen blazing star in Zones 8a–9b.

**Other species**

You may also find Elegant blazing star (*Liatris elegans*) suitable for exceptionally deep, well-drained sand in North and North Central Florida.
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 shower 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 may be too woody for division in summer or fall). It readily reseeds itself in the garden.

**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**

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; plants should be 3 to 4 feet apart. Don’t crowd plants; allow for good air circulation. Mulching may help to reduce the number of unwanted seedlings.

**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. Cutting back 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 8–10a.

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**CAUTION**

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.
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 found in native nurseries. Tracy’s silver-leaved aster (Pityopsis graminifolia var. tracyi) can be found in all of the habitats, though mostly in flatwoods. 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. Tracy’s silver-leaved aster also makes a short silvery groundcover and can often be seen on upper slopes of many roadsides.

**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 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**

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.

**Seeds**

Though some varieties will spread, Pityopsis do not reseed as readily as do wildflowers such as Coreopsis and Blanketflower. 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.

**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–11a.

**Silver-leaved aster**

Photo by Eleanor Dietrich

**Flower flies on Silver-leaved aster**

Photo by Peg Urban

**Silver-leaved aster in a landscape setting**

Photo by Mary Keim

**CAUTION**

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

Cut flowers can last up to 10 days in bouquets. Black-eyed Susan roots also have been used in various medicines.

**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.

**Plants**

Plants are available in gallon containers from Florida Association of Native Nursery members. 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 Susans are best suited for zones 8a–11a.

**Bouquets and bees**

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

**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.

**Plants**

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.
Wild petunia (Ruellia spp.) 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 Ruellia carolinensis is the most common, both in the wild and commercially. Other species include Ciliate wild petunia (Ruellia ciliosa) and Thickleaf 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. carolinensis 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.

**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.

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.

**Plants**

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

**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.

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.
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.

**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, 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**

Some growers have successfully established Lyreleaf sage 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.

**Seeds**

Scarlet and Lyreleaf sage seeds are commercially available. 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. Use Scarlet sage in the mid-portion of a mixed wildflower bed or as an accent by itself.

**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 afternoon 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.

**Butterflies and bees**

*Salvia* are excellent nectar sources for butterflies and bumblebees. Hummingbirds are attracted to it, too.

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

**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, thus plantings will naturally and quickly increase in size.

**Seeds**

Seeds are small, shiny and black and are produced in nutlets. 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.

Helmet skullcap seeds are often available from the Florida Wildflower Growers Cooperative.

**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**

Helmet skullcap readily spreads by seed. 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**

Skullcap is best suited for zones 8a–9a.

**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.
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 only 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 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

Plants are available in 1- and 3-gallon pots. Both 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

Both species are available from 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.

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 Exotic Pest Plant Council (FLEPPC) 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 FLEPPC website: www.fleppc.org.
Florida has two native *Silphium* species, both with robust foliage and flowers. The traditional common name for these plants is rosinweed, but to eliminate any misconception that these beautiful plants are weeds, new common names were adopted. 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.

**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**

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

**Butterflies and bees**

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

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

**Seeds**

Starry rosinweed seeds are commercially available; you also can collect your own when flowerheads are dry. Break them apart to separate the seeds. As perennials, both species persist in the landscape and can reseed on their own. 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 the seed by keeping it moist and refrigerated in planting media for 30 days. Seed will begin to sprout in 4 days and complete germination in 2 weeks.

**Plants**

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.

**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.

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.
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
Since Seaside goldenrod spreads by rhizomes to make dense stands with stout stems, it is easy to retain in the landscape. It can be propagated using division or seeds.

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.

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.

Plants
Plants are available in quart, 1-gallon and 3-gallon containers. Because of their large size, they can be spaced 3 feet or more apart and allowed to fill in over time.

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–11a.

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.
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 species of aster native to Florida, several are well-suited for use in landscapes. 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. elliottii*) 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.

Elliott’s aster is a deciduous shrub that 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 to lance-shaped with toothed margins.

Climbing aster blooms in the fall and continues into January; it may bloom year-round in favorable conditions. Elliott’s aster typically blooms in late fall.

### 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 species 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–11a.

### 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. elliottii* 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 spring 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.
Show the neighbors your wild side — Plant Florida wildflowers!

Wildflower Seed and Plant Growers Association

Seed packets cover 60 square feet and are available in a variety of wildflowers.

For more information, call (352) 988-8117, e-mail businessmanager@floridawildflowers.com or visit www.floridawildflowers.com.

Resources

Learn more about what you can do in your landscape. Visit www.FlaWildflowers.org to:

- Watch videos about selecting and planting wildflowers
- See sample landscape plans
- Download handouts to help with plant selection, growing and maintenance
- Read informative articles on attracting pollinators to your landscape
- Have your native landscape recognized through the Wildflowers, naturally! program
- And much more!

What you can do

- Landscape with Florida native wildflowers and plants
- Stop using pesticides, which harm bees and other beneficial insects
- Stop using fertilizers, which harm waterways and lakes
- Ask your county to preserve roadside wildflowers
- Work with lawmakers to preserve and conserve natural resources and lands

Other resources

- Find a native plant nursery in your area: www.PlantRealFlorida.org
- Purchase native wildflower seeds: www.FloridaWildflowers.com
- Learn more about native plants: www.FNPS.org

USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map

The USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map can help gardeners determine which plants are most likely to thrive in their landscape. The map is based on the average annual minimum winter temperature. It is not precise. Consult your local native nursery for advice on the best plants for your area.

8a 10–15°F
8b 15–20°F
9a 20–25°F
9b 25–30°F
10a 30–35°F
10b 35–40°F
11a 40–45°F
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Collaborating with our partners on conservation opportunities unique to Florida and its diverse ecosystems

Planting native grasses and wildflowers to create safe havens for butterflies, bees and other pollinator species

Photo: David Shipper (Audubon)