



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.

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.

Butterflies and bees

Coreopsis is a great nectar plant for butterflies and pollinators.

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