**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.

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

**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.

**Butterflies 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.

**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.

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.