


  


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.

**CAUTION**