

# White wild indigo

(*Baptisia alba*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary\\_of\\_botanical\\_terms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms).

White wild indigo is a long-lived perennial herbaceous wildflower. Its showy white blooms are borne on erect, terminal racemes that extend a foot or more above the foliage and remain for several weeks. A single plant may produce several flower stalks. Leaves are compound, alternately arranged, and comprised of three bluish-green, elliptic to ovate leaflets. Young seed pods are green and turn grayish-black as they mature. They often appear inflated.

White wild indigo occurs naturally in pine flatwoods and along riverbanks and deciduous forest edges. It attracts many pollinators and is the larval host plant for the wild indigo duskywing and Zarucco duskywing butterflies. The fruits are eaten by a variety of birds, and the foliage is browsed by rabbits and deer. (The plant's large tuberous roots allow it to withstand browsing.)

Many species of *Baptisia* were historically used to produce a blue dye, hence the common name of the genus, indigo.



Photo by Lisa Roberts.

**Family:** Fabaceae (Legume, bean or pea family)

**Native range:** Panhandle, north and central peninsula

*To see where natural populations of white wild indigo have been vouchered, visit [www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu](http://www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu).*

**Hardiness:** Zones 8a–9b

**Soil:** Moderately to very dry, acidic to neutral soils

**Exposure:** Full sun to partial shade

**Growth habit:** 2–3'+ tall, often wider than tall

**Propagation:** Seed

**Garden tips:** White wild indigo works well in a mixed wildflower planting, particularly in the background given its relative height. It dies back in winter, but returns in the spring. It does not tolerate root disturbance, so plant seed or seedling where the mature plant is intended to remain.

White wild indigo plants are often available from nurseries that specialize in Florida native plants. Visit [www.PlantRealFlorida.org](http://www.PlantRealFlorida.org) to find a nursery in your area. Seeds can be purchased through the Florida Wildflower Growers Cooperative.