

American bluehearts

(*Buchnera americana*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms.

American bluehearts is a perennial wildflower found in pinelands, prairies and marshes, and along roadsides. It blooms year-round, with peak blooming in late spring through summer. It attracts many bees and butterflies, including the Common buckeye, for which it is a larval host. Its seeds are eaten by birds.

The flower varies in color from bright violet to almost white. It is comprised of a tubular corolla with five petal-like lobes. The entrance to the corolla is hairy, as is its exterior. The green to purple calyx and the delicate stem are also covered in trichomes. Flowers are axillary and born in terminal spikes or spikelike racemes. Leaves are sessile with rough surfaces and entire to toothed margins. They are oppositely arranged and reduced in size as they ascend the stem. The fruit is an inconspicuous dark purple capsule.

American bluehearts are hemiparasitic, meaning it can grow independently (without a host) but it grows stronger with a host. It has parasitic roots that it attaches to its host's root system. The parasitism is generally not harmful to the host, except during times of stress (such as a drought) when the plant will increase the parasitic effect, which may result in damage to the host. Common hosts, when tend to be trees, include pines (*Pinus* spp.), Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), tupelo (*Nyssa* spp.), Tuliptree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), and some oaks (*Quercus* spp.).

American bluehearts was once classified in the Scrophulariaceae (Snapdragon or figwort) family. Some botanists recognize the white form to the plant as a separate species, *Buchnera floridana*.

The origin of the genus name is under dispute. Some attribute it to Johann Gottfried Büchner (1695–1749), a German botanist, while others suggest it honors Andreas Elias Büchner (1701–69), a German physician and known correspondent of Carl Linnaeus.

Family: Orobanchaceae (Broomrape family)

Native range: Nearly throughout Florida

To see where natural populations of Common name have been vouchered, visit www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.

Hardiness: Zones 8A–11

Lifespan: Perennial

Soil: Moist to wet, well-drained sandy or calcareous soils

Exposure: Full sun

Growth habit: 12–24" tall

Propagation: Seed

Garden tips: Although not widely cultivated, American bluehearts can be used in naturalistic landscapes and restorations. It is fast growing and moderately tolerant of drought conditions and nutrient-poor soils.



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