

Florida paintbrush

(*Carphephorus corymbosus*)

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

Also known as Coastalplain chaffhead, Florida paintbrush is a showy herbaceous wildflower that blooms from late summer into fall. It occurs naturally in pine, scrubby and dry to mesic flatwoods, sandhills and ruderal areas. Its large, striking flower clusters are very attractive to butterflies and other pollinators.

Flowers are born in large flat-topped corymbs. Each bloom is comprised of many bright pink to lavender tubular disk florets and no ray florets. The inflorescence appears atop an erect, unbranched stem that arises from a basal rosette. Basal leaves are flat, linear and succulent in appearance; stem leaves are sessile and alternately arranged. Stems are covered in tiny hairs. The fruit is an achene-like cypsela with a rough surface and a tuft of bristly hairs.

The species epithet *corymbosus* is from the Latin *corymbus*, meaning “cluster of fruit or flowers.”

Family: Asteraceae (Aster or Composite family)

Native range: Peninsular Florida, Bay County

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

Hardiness: Zones 8A–10B

Soil: Well-drained, sandy soils

Exposure: Full sun to minimal shade

Growth habit: up to 3' tall

Propagation: Seeds

Garden tips: Florida paintbrush is a star for attracting butterflies and makes a great addition to formal and naturalistic landscapes. It is easy to integrate and maintain. Mature plants will produce a number of progeny nearby. Spent flowerheads should be deadheaded to prevent the spread of seed.

Other species: Vanillaleaf (*C. odoratissimus*) occurs naturally in mesic to hydric pine flatwoods from North to north Central Florida. As leaves dry, they emit a vanilla scent when crushed. Vanillaleaf was formerly collected from the wild to flavor tobacco, but was found to be carcinogenic when smoked. Pineland purple (*C. subtropicanus*) is found in dry to mesic flatwoods from south Central Florida through South Florida except the Keys. The plant has no vanilla scent. Although the two species differ slightly in form, they both bloom from late summer into fall with panicles of deep lavender florets.

Florida paintbrush plants are often available at nurseries that specialize in native plants. Visit PlantRealFlorida.org to find a native nursery on your area.



Photo by Eleanor Dietrich