

Mistflower

(*Conoclinium coelestinum*)

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

Mistflower, Blue mistflower, Wild ageratum, Pink eupatorium, Hardy ageratum, and Blue boneset are just some of the many common names used to identify this eye-catching Florida native wildflower. Found in riverine swamps, moist meadows and roadside ditches, its flowers give the appearance of a blue fog when blooming en masse. Flowers are very attractive to pollinators, especially butterflies, moths and long-tongued bees.

Mistflower's many branched stems that bear dense, flat clusters of disk florets that vary in color from bright blue to lavender to pinkish-white. Ray florets are absent. Long protruding stamens give the flower heads a fuzzy appearance. Light green linear bracts surround the flower base. Leaves are almost triangular in shape, with toothed margins and faintly pubescent surfaces. They are petiolate and oppositely arranged. Fruits are small achenes with tiny hairs that aid in wind distribution. Roots are rhizomatous.

The genus *Conoclinium* was once classified in the genus *Eupatorium*, but genetic analysis revealed differences that required reclassification to its own genus. The species epithet *coelestinum* is from the Latin *caelistis* (*coelestis*), meaning "celestial" or "heavenly." It refers to the sky-blue color of the flowers.

Family: Asteraceae (Aster, daisy or composite family)

Native range: Throughout Florida

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

Hardiness: Zones 8A–11

Soil: Moist to wet, sandy, loamy or mucky soils

Exposure: Full sun to partial shade

Growth habit: 1–3' tall

Garden tips: Mistflower is perfect for a wildflower garden where they can naturalize freely, particularly in a moist setting. It does spread quickly, however, and can take over if not maintained. It is very easy to grow from seed and by division, and makes a good border plant.

Caution: Mistflower has a wide range throughout the East and Midwest. Many cultivars have been developed, so be sure to buy locally sourced plants. *Praxelis clematidea* is a very aggressive invader that looks a lot like Mistflower. The flowerheads are taller than wide, its seeds are black, and its leaves smell like cat urine when crushed. It grows in drier soils and is usually found in disturbed sites.

Mistflower seeds are available through the Florida Wildflowers Growers Cooperative at www.FloridaWildflowers.com. Plants are often available at nurseries that specialize in native plants. Visit PlantRealFlorida.org to find a native nursery on your area.



Photo by Stacey Matrazzo