

Innocence

(*Houstonia procumbens*)

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

Although often overlooked, the diminutive white flowers and verdurous leaves of innocence are a welcome sight for anyone with the winter blues. This low-growing perennial creeps along the floors of many open habitats throughout Florida. It goes largely unnoticed until late winter and early spring when it blooms with lovely white four-lobed flowers on a tidy carpet of green ovate leaves. Although its flowers are only 4-6 mm, the plant can form a miniature wildflower garden in pinelands and prairies. Innocence occurs naturally in pine flatwoods, sandhills, scrub and ruderal areas.

Family: Rubiaceae (Madder or coffee family)

Native range: Throughout Florida

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

Hardiness: Zones 8–10

Soil: Moderately moist soils

Exposure: Sunny, open areas to light shade

Growth habit: 1" tall, spreading up to 12"

Propagation: Seed

Garden tips: Innocence is rarely for sale in nurseries, but is easy to grow and can be used as a slow-spreading winter groundcover in a lightly mulched or open area. Although dormant in summer, it co-exists well with sparse grasses and seems to reseed or be long-lived.



Photo by Mary Keim