

Alligatorlily

(*Hymenocallis palmeri*)

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

Alligatorlily is a perennial wildflower endemic to cypress swamps, marshes, wet prairies, savannas and moist open flatwoods in Florida's central and southern peninsula. It also occurs in Duval and Bradford counties and is sometimes found in roadside ditches. Its striking white flowers are primarily pollinated by Sphinx moths.

Alligatorlily's fragrant flowers are solitary and terminal. They have three linear petals and three petal-like sepals, all of which radiate from beneath a thin, white, funnel-shaped corona. The corona is marked by

faintly toothed margins and a greenish "eye" in its center. Leaves are basal, linear or straplike and can grow up to 16 inches in length. Stamens are long and prominent with large noticeable anthers. Seeds are green, egg-shaped and relatively large (up to ¾-inch in diameter).

The genus *Hymenocallis* is from the Greek ὑμῆν (hymen), meaning "membrane," and καλός (*kalos*), meaning "beautiful," and refers to the corona. The species epithet *palmeri* honors British botanist Edward Palmer.

Family: Amaryllidaceae (Amaryllis family)

Native range: Central and southern peninsula, Bradford and Duval counties

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

Hardiness: Zones 9–10

Soil: Moist to saturated sandy or mucky soils

Exposure: Full sun to partial shade

Growth habit: 2'+ tall

Propagation: Seed

Garden tips: Alligatorlily works well in naturalistic settings with moist to wet conditions, such as a pond edge restoration. It is easy to transplant and relocate. It is neither salt nor drought tolerant.

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



Photo by Mary Keim