

Standing cypress

(*Ipomopsis rubra*)

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

Standing cypress is a brilliant, biennial herbaceous wildflower. Its inflorescence is a dense, elongated, terminal spike of long, bright red, tubular flowers. Stems are pubescent. Leaves are fern- or needle-like, sessile and alternately arranged. Standing cypress begins as a basal rosette of fern-like foliage. In its second year, it will send up an erect, leafy stem that looks a bit like dog fennel until it blooms into a spectacular spray of scarlet.

Standing cypress blooms summer through fall. It occurs naturally in sandhills, coastal strands, beach dunes and ruderal areas. It is very attractive to butterflies as well as other pollinators.

Contrary to what its common name might suggest, standing cypress is not related in any way to the cypress tree (*Taxodium* sp.) It might, however, refer to the plant's leaves which vaguely resemble cypress needles. Other common names are Spanish larkspur, Texas plume and skyrocket.

Family: Polemoniaceae (Phlox family)

Native range: North and central peninsula; Escambia, Jackson and Leon Counties

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

Hardiness: Zones 8–9b

Soil: Well-drained, sandy soils

Exposure: Full sun to minimal shade

Growth habit: 3'+ tall

Propagation: Seeds

Garden tips: Standing cypress is a great landscape addition if you want to attract butterflies and hummingbirds. It is very sensitive, however, and is susceptible to root rot if its soil doesn't drain to its needs. It is a moderate self-seeder.

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



Photo courtesy of Florida Department of Transportation