

Florida loosestrife

(*Lythrum flagellare*)

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

Florida loosestrife is a state-listed endangered wildflower endemic to the west-central peninsula. This low-growing, creeping wildflower can be found along wet prairie edges, pond margins and moist roadsides. It typically blooms from February through June but is often overlooked because of its diminutive stature and tendency to blend in with the plants among which it grows.

Florida loosestrife's small (less than ½ inch in diameter), purple to pinkish flowers have six crinkled petals, each with a dark purple midvein. Calyces are six-lobed and partially fused, forming a tube. Leaves are sessile and oval to elliptic with round or cuneate bases. Leaf arrangement is usually opposite. Stems are multi-branched and purplish to reddish. New stems may be erect or decumbent, while older stems are prostrate. Fruit is a dehiscent capsule.



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The genus name *Lythrum* comes from the Greek *lythron*, meaning “gore” or “blood,” and may allude to the flower color of some species. The species epithet *flagellare* is from the Latin *flagellum*, literally meaning “whip” or “lash,” and loosely translating to “arm,” “tentacle” or “vine shoot.” It refers to the plant's sprawling habit..

Family: Lythraceae (Loosestrife family)

Native range: Coastal counties from Hernando south to Collier; also Orange, Hardee, Desoto, Okeechobee, Glades and Hendry counties

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

Hardiness: Zones 9A–10B

Lifespan: Perennial

Soil: Moist to wet soils

Exposure: Full sun

Growth habit: Sprawling; may form mats in areas that have been mowed

Florida loosestrife is not commercially available. Visit a natural area to see it.