

Wild pennyroyal

(*Piloblephis rigida*)

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

Wild pennyroyal is a low-growing, evergreen, herbaceous to woody shrub. It typically flowers in late winter through spring, but can bloom year-round. It occurs naturally in scrub, scrubby and pine flatwoods, sandhills, dry prairies and ruderal areas. Flowers are attractive to a variety of bees and butterflies. The entire plant is delightfully aromatic, particularly when crushed. Its leaves can also be brewed into a minty tea.

Wild pennyroyal's small, 2-lipped flowers may be lavender, purple or pinkish. Lower lips are lobed with dark purple spots. Stamens are prominent. Flowers are borne in dense, cone-shaped terminal clusters. Sepals are pubescent and green with purple margins. Leaves are tiny, needle-like with entire margins, and oppositely arranged. Stems are woody and branched. Fruit is a small aggregate of nutlets.

Piloblephis rigida is the only species in its genus. The name comes from the Greek words *pilo* (hairy) and *blephis* (eyelid), referring to the tiny, soft hairs that coat the sepals, and *rigida* (rigid), which refers to its stiff branches.

Family: Lamiaceae (Mint family)

Native range: Peninsular Florida

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

Hardiness: Zones 8b–10b

Soil: Dry, well-drained, sandy soils

Exposure: Full sun

Growth habit: 1–2' tall and equally broad

Propagation: Seeds, cuttings

Garden tips: Wild pennyroyal is best suited for naturalistic plantings and restorations, but also works well as a groundcover or border planting. It is drought-tolerant and grows in nutrient-poor soil.

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



Photo by Wayne Matchett