Blueflower butterwort is an insectivorous wildflower that typically blooms between January and May. It occurs naturally in bogs and low pinelands throughout much of the Florida peninsula. It is a state-threatened species and is susceptible to drought conditions, drainage, habitat loss and illegal collection.

Blueflower butterwort’s blooms are blue to purplish-blue with notched, veined petals and a dark, tubular throat. Flowers are solitary and borne on erect leafless scapes that arise from basal rosettes of succulent yellowish-green leaves. Leaf margins are entire and involute. The scape, sepals and leaves are covered in tiny hairs. The hairs on the leaf surface secrete a sticky mucilage in which insects become trapped. (Insects often mistake the mucilage for drops of water.) The leaf margins curl over the trapped insect. Enzymes are then secreted to help the plant digest its prey. The ability to trap and digest insects allows blueflower butterwort (like most insectivorous plants) to survive in nutrient-deficient conditions. Subsequently, it helps prevent insect predation. Blueflower butterwort seeds are borne in inconspicuous capsules.

The genus name, Pinguicula, comes from the Latin pinguis, which means “fat” and alludes to the greasy feeling of the leaf surface. The species epithet, caerulea, references the Latin word caerulus, which means “from the sky or sea,” referring to the blue color. The common name, butterwort, comes from the historic use of the leaves for curdling milk.

**Family:** Lentibulariaceae (Bladderwort family)

**Native range:** Most of peninsular Florida

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

**Hardiness:** Zones 7–9

**Soil:** Wet to moist, low-nutrient acidic soils

**Exposure:** Full sun

**Growth habit:** 4–12” tall

**Propagation:** Seed

**Garden tips:** Although not commercially available, blueflower butterwort can be propagated by seed. Getting seed, however, may be challenging as it cannot be collected from public natural lands. Your best bet is to find someone who has it growing on privately owned land. Be sure to get permission before collecting on private land.