

Yellow milkwort

(*Polygala rugelii*)

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

Also known as Rugel's milkwort, Yellow milkwort is an annual herbaceous wildflower endemic to the Florida peninsula. Its showy flowers are bright yellow and borne in compact, thimble-shaped clusters. They are solitary and have large, lateral sepals. Leaves are alternately arranged and have smooth margins. Upper leaves are small and lanceolate in shape; lower leaves are large, obovate to spatulate, and appear as a rosette.

Yellow milkwort blooms primarily in summer and fall, but it has throughout most of the year. It occurs naturally in wet pine flatwoods.

The name *Polygala* comes from the Greek *polys*, which means "many or much," and *gala*, which means "milk." It is so-named because it was once believed that the presence of *Polygala* species in cow fields would result in higher milk production. The species name, *rugelii*, refers to the British-born botanist and physician, Ferdinand Rugel (1806-1879), who collected and named many plants throughout the southeastern US.

Family: Polygalaceae (Milkwort family)

Native range: Peninsular Florida

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

Growth habit: 1–3' tall

Propagation: Seeds, root division

Garden tips: You'll have to visit a natural area to see this little jewel as it is not commercially available in plant or seed form.



Photo by John Moran