

Blue-eyed grass

(*Sisyrinchium angustifolium*)

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

Blue-eyed grass is an evergreen, clump-forming perennial wildflower found in wet flatwoods, wet prairies, and moist open habitats throughout Florida. The flowers attract a variety of pollinators, including bumblebees, sweat bees, and other native bees and flies. Birds eat the seeds.

Its dainty star-shaped flowers and are born atop flat, grasslike stems. Tepals are blue, but may appear purple or lavender, especially in photos. They darken as they near the center of the flower, which is bright yellow. They have obvious venation, are tipped with sharp points, and arch back toward the stem as the flower opens. Flowers generally open around noon in sunny conditions and close at the end of the day. Leaves are long, linear, flattened and basal. Seeds develop in capsules that wrinkle and turn dark brown as they mature.

The grasslike appearance of both stems and leaves give Blue-eyed grass its common name. However, it is in no way related to the grass family. There are several species of *Sisyrinchium* native to Florida, but *S. angustifolium* is generally the only species available for the home landscape.

Family: Iridaceae (Iris family)

Native range: Throughout Florida

To see where natural populations of Blue-eyed grass have been vouchered, visit www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.

Lifespan: Perennial

Hardiness: Zones 8A–11

Soil: Moderately dry, moist or wet sandy, loamy or calcareous soils

Exposure: Full sun

Growth habit: 6–12" tall

Propagation: Seeds, division

Garden tips: Blue-eyed grass' low profile makes it an excellent groundcover that will provide a carpet of green through the year and masses of blue flowers in the spring. Planting in full sun and moist sandy soil will result in denser foliage and more flowers, but it is somewhat adaptable to drier and shadier conditions. It is a prolific self-seeder provided there are multiple plants; solitary plants typically don't produce viable seed. It will also spread by underground rhizomes to create fuller stands, but is not an aggressive spreader. Blue-eyed grass does not transplant well in full summer heat, so plants should be installed in fall or winter to insure that they are well established before summer.

Blue-eyed grass plants are often available at nurseries that specialize in native plants. Visit PlantRealFlorida.org to find a native nursery on your area.



Photo by Mary Keim