

Blanketflower

(*Gaillardia pulchella*)

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

NOTE: In 2020, studies concluded that *Gaillardia pulchella* is not native to the Eastern US, including Florida. However, due to its long history of cultivation and sale as a native plant, its tolerance to dry sandy sites, and its benefit to pollinators, it is unlikely that it will be completely removed from the native plant industry.

Also known as Indian blanket and Firewheel, Blanketflower occurs throughout Florida in coastal dunes, dry savannahs and other dry, open, or disturbed sites. Its colorful blooms attract a variety of pollinating insects.



Photo by Emily Bell

Blanketflower's ray florets typically are bicolored with an inner red band surrounded by an outer yellow band. However, flowers also can be entirely red or yellow, have an inner red band surrounded by a white band, or, on rare occasions, be entirely white. Rarely, flowers may be tubular—narrow at the base and flaring out like trumpets. The flower's center disk florets are dark red to purplish. Leaves are linear- to lance-shaped and quite hairy, which makes the plant appear grayish green.

Family: Asteraceae (aster, composite, or daisy family)

Native range: Scattered throughout Florida in 27 counties but favoring the east coast

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

Lifespan: Annual or short-lived perennial

Soil: Dry to slightly dry, well-drained sandy soils

Exposure: Full sun

Growth habit: 12–18" tall; can easily spread to twice that

Propagation: Seed

Florida regions of landscape suitability: North, Central, South

Garden tips: Blanketflower's brightly colored flowers, long blooming season, and drought tolerance make this a popular garden plant. It is relatively pest and disease free, and does well in difficult conditions such as in coastal landscapes, roadsides and parking lots. Use it where it can be allowed to spread, as it can be a very aggressive re-seeder.

Caution: Varieties sold at many large retail outlets and garden centers, and by national wildflower seed companies, are usually nonnative *Gaillardia aristata* or varieties of *G. pulchella* or *Gaillardia* × *grandiflora* (a hybrid of *G. pulchella* and *G. aristata*).

Blanketflower is often available from nurseries that specialize in Florida native plants. Visit www.PlantRealFlorida.org to find a nursery in your area. Seeds may be available from the Florida Wildflower Growers Cooperative at www.FloridaWildflowers.com.

