

Rayless sunflower

(*Helianthus radula*)

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

Rayless sunflower occurs naturally in pine flatwoods and seasonally wet savannahs and along moist to dry roadsides. It typically blooms late spring into early fall, attracting a wide variety of butterflies and other pollinators. Birds and small animals eat the seeds.

Each solitary flowerhead includes a compact but relatively large center composed of many small, dark maroon disk florets accented with yellow stamens. Ray florets are almost entirely absent. (Some specimens do produce a few small yellow ray florets.) Basal leaves are thick and rounded with a rough, hairy surface. Stem leaves are few, elliptic to ovate, and hairy and become reduced in size as they ascend the stem. They are oppositely arranged. Stems also are hairy.

The genus name *Helianthus* is from the Greek *helios*, or “sun,” and *anthos*, or “flower.” The species epithet *radula* is from the Latin *radula*, meaning “scraper,” referring to the roughness of the leaf surfaces.

Family: Asteraceae (Aster, composite or daisy family)

Native range: Panhandle, most of Central and North Florida, and Collier County

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

Lifespan: Perennial

Soil: Somewhat dry to very moist sandy or loamy soils

Exposure: Full sun to partial shade

Growth habit: 1–2' tall

Propagation: Seeds

Florida regions of landscape suitability: North, Central

Garden tips: Appreciate Rayless sunflower for its unusual flowerheads and large basal leaves.

It is a great addition to a home pollinator garden, as it easily adapts to a variety of conditions and will attract butterflies as well as other pollinators. It does best in open, sunny areas. Plant with a mix of Chalky bluestem or Muhlygrass for a striking display.

Rayless sunflowers are often available from nurseries that specialize in Florida native plants. Visit www.PlantRealFlorida.org to find a nursery in your area.



Photo by Emily Bell

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