

# Carolina grass-of-Parnassus

(*Parnassia caroliniana*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary\\_of\\_botanical\\_terms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms).

Carolina grass-of-Parnassus is a rare and striking wildflower. Listed as state-endangered, it is found only in Florida's Franklin and Liberty counties and a small portion of the Carolinas. It occurs naturally in wet prairies and in the ecotone between pine uplands and seepage slopes. It flowers in abundance where populations occur, creating a stunning fall scene of starry white blooms.



Photo by Emily Bell

Carolina grass-of-Parnassus flowers occur solitarily atop a long slender green stalk. The blooms are about 1 inch across and have five white oval-shaped petals, each with green veins, giving them a delicate pattern. The ovary is a large and conspicuous white oval in the flower's center. Basal leaves are large, slightly succulent and rounded to kidney-shaped, but are usually obscured by the grasses among which the plant commonly grows.

The genus name of *Parnassia* and the common name grass-of-Parnassus refer to Greece's Mount Parnassus, home of the Muses and to the Oracle of Delphi. Of its common name reference to grass, it is rumored (but unconfirmed) that the cows of Mount Parnassus enjoyed *Parnassia* as they enjoyed the other grasses, so *Parnassia* was deemed an honorary grass. (It is not a grass and is in no way related to the grasses, nor does it bear any resemblance to a grass.)

**Family:** Parnassiaceae

**Native range:** Franklin and Liberty counties

To see where natural populations of Carolina grass-of-Parnassus have been vouchered, visit [www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu](http://www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu).

**Lifespan:** Perennial

**Soil:** Moist to seasonally wet or saturated soils

**Exposure:** Full sun

**Growth habit:** 1-2 feet tall

Carolina grass-of-Parnassus is not commercially available. Visit a natural area to see it.

SCAN FOR FULL  
PLANT PROFILE:

