

Candyroot

(*Senega nana*)

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

Candyroot is an annual herbaceous wildflower found in wet to moist pine flatwoods, wet prairies and coastal swales. It typically blooms in late spring through summer, but can bloom year-round. Its seeds are spread almost exclusively by ants. The seeds contain elaisomes — fleshy, oil- and protein-rich structures. Ants collect the seeds and take them to their nest where they and their larva consume the elaisomes, but leave the seed intact. The seeds are then tossed from the nest into favorable germinating conditions.



Photo by Emily Bell

Candyroot's distinctive inflorescence is a compact, thimble-shaped raceme comprised of many tiny pale to lemon-yellow flowers. Leaves are thick, spatulate and curl slightly upright. They are mostly in basal rosettes. Stem leaves are few and alternately arranged. Stems are glabrous. Seeds are born in capsules.

The species epithet *nana* is from the Greek *nânos* or "dwarf," and refers to the plant's small habit. The plant's root has a licorice flavor when chewed, hence the common name "candyroot." Like other species of *Senega*, it is sometimes referred to as bachelor's buttons.

Family: Polygalaceae (Milkwort family)

Native range: Nearly throughout

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

Lifespan: Annual

Soil: Moist to wet well-drained soils

Exposure: Full sun to minimal shade

Growth habit: 3–6" tall

Note: Research published in 2023 assigned the New World clade of *Polygala* to the genus *Senega* (Pastore et al). This species was previously known as *Polygala nana* and is likely still listed as such in many online and print resources.

Candyroot is not commercially available. Visit a natural area to see it.

SCAN FOR FULL
PLANT PROFILE:



FLORIDA
Wildflower
FOUNDATION

Florida Wildflower Foundation • P O Box 941691, Maitland, FL 32794-1691 • 407-622-1606 • www.FlaWildflowers.org

