

Gardening With Wildflowers

by Dr. Walter Kingsley Taylor



Throughout the United States there is an increased interest in using wildflowers for landscape plantings. Florida is no exception. With the rapid development of our native habitats we are losing annually thousands of acres where wildflowers grow. Roadsides of many county roads in Florida have become wastelands that grow weedy plants including ragweed, cogongrass, Johnson-grass, dog fennel, Mexican tea, and many others. These noxious plants compete with our more desirable wildflowers and eventually replace them.

Establishing wildflowers in ones yard or creating a wildflower meadow are not easy tasks. Wildflowers need help in becoming established; however, once they are established, the garden or site containing these plants will need minimal care. When planting wildflowers make a concerted effort to emulate nature. The more one knows about the biology of the plants (e.g., where they grow in nature, when they produce seeds, when the seeds germinate, etc.) the better chance the results will be positive.

Not all attractive wildflowers one might desire can be grown in Florida due to their climate, soil type, and other habitational requirements. Plants that grow in the Panhandle probably will not do well in South Florida; the reverse is also true. Experiment with different species, but experiment with the common, more hearty-types. Read books that are available on Florida wildflowers, paying attention to species that occur in your locale.

Selected Florida Wildflowers for Gardening

Name & family	area in Florida	soil moisture	flowering season
Herbaceous types:			
<u>Asteraceae (aster or daisy family)</u>			
*Black-eyed Susan, <i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	throughout	dry–moist soils	all year
*Blanket flower, <i>Gaillardia pulchella</i>	throughout	open sandy areas	all year
*Blazing star, <i>Liatrix spicata</i>	throughout	moist soils	spring–fall
*Tickseed, <i>Coreopsis lanceolata</i>	central & north	dry–moist, sandy soils	spring–summer
*Tickseed, <i>Coreopsis tinctoria</i>	central & north	moist soils	spring–summer
*Yarrow, <i>Achillea millefolium</i>	central & north	dry–moist soils	spring–fall
Dye flower, <i>Coreopsis basalis</i>	central & north	moist soils	spring–summer
Goldenrod, <i>Solidago odora</i>	throughout	dry–moist soils	spring–fall
Tickseed, <i>Coreopsis leavenworthii</i>	central & north	moist soils	all year
<u>Campanulaceae (bluebell family)</u>			
*Cardinal flower, <i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>	central & north	wet sites	summer–fall
<u>Commelinaceae (day flower family)</u>			
*Spiderwort, <i>Tradescantia ohiensis</i>	throughout	moist soils	all year
<u>Fabaceae (bean or pea family)</u>			
*Crimson clover, <i>Trifolium incarnatum</i>	central & north	moist soils	spring
*Sundial lupine, <i>Lupinus perennis</i>	north	moist, sandy soils	spring
White wild indigo, <i>Baptisia alba</i>	central & north	moist soils	spring
<u>Iridaceae (iris family)</u>			
Blue-eyed grass, <i>Sisyrinchium angustifolium</i>	throughout	moist wet soils	spring–summer
Prairie iris, <i>Iris hexagona</i>	throughout	moist wet soils	spring
<u>Onagraceae (primrose family)</u>			
*Showy primrose, <i>Oenothera speciosa</i>	central & north	moist disturbed soils	spring–fall
<u>Poaceae (grass family)</u>			
Muhly grass, <i>Muhlenbergia capillaris</i>	throughout	sandy soils	fall

Name & family	area in Florida	soil moisture	flowering season
<u>Polemoniaceae (phlox family)</u>			
*Annual garden phlox, <i>Phlox drummondii</i>	throughout	dry–moist sandy soils	winter–summer
<u>Rubiaceae (madder family)</u>			
Partridge berry, <i>Mitchella repens</i>	throughout	moist soil	all year
<u>Scrophulariaceae (snapdragon family)</u>			
Mullein, <i>Verbascum virgatum</i>	central & north	moist soils	spring–summer
<u>Verbenaceae (vervain or verbena family)</u>			
Moss verbena, <i>Glandularia pulchella</i>	throughout	dry–moist soils	spring–fall
Shrub types:			
<u>Asteraceae (aster or daisy family)</u>			
Garberia, <i>Garberia heterophylla</i>	central	sandy soils	spring–winter
<u>Clusiaceae (St. John’s wort family)</u>			
St. Andrew’s cross, <i>Hypericum hypericoides</i>	throughout	dry–moist soils	all year
<u>Ericaceae (heath family)</u>			
Dog hobble, <i>Leucothoe axillaris</i>	central & north	moist, acid soils	winter–spring
Fetterbush, <i>Leucothoe racemosa</i>	central & north	moist, acid soils	spring
Flame azalea, <i>Rhododendron austrinum</i>	central & north	moist, acid soils	spring
Shiny blueberry, <i>Vaccinium myrsinites</i>	throughout	moist, acid soils	winter–spring
Shiny Iyonia, <i>Lyonia lucida</i>	throughout	dry to moist acid soils	winter–spring
Wild azalea, <i>Rhododendron canescens</i>	central & north	moist, acid soils	spring
<u>Fabaceae (bean or pea family)</u>			
Coralbean, <i>Erythrina herbacea</i>	throughout	dry to moist soils	winter–spring
Pineland wild indigo, <i>Baptisia lanceolata</i>	central & north	moist, sandy soils	spring
<u>Laminaceae (mint family)</u>			
Blue curls, <i>Trichostema dichotomum</i>	throughout	moist soils	summer–fall
Horsemint, <i>Monarda punctata</i>	central & north	moist soils	spring–fall
Tropical sage, <i>Salvia coccinea</i>	throughout	moist sandy soils	all year
<u>Malvaceae (mallow family)</u>			
Scarlet hibiscus, <i>Hibiscus coccineus</i>	throughout	moist–wet soils	spring–fall
<u>Saxifragaceae (saxifrage family)</u>			
Virginia willow, <i>Itea virginica</i>	throughout	moist–wet soils	winter–summer
<u>Verbenaceae (vervain or verbena family)</u>			
Beautyberry, <i>Callicarpa americana</i>	throughout	dry–moist soils	spring–fall
Blue porterweed, <i>Stachytarpheta jamaicensis</i>	central & south	moist soils	all year
Firebush, <i>Hamelia patens</i>	central & south	moist soils	all year

* Seeds can usually be found in commercial catalogs.