



FLORIDA WILDFLOWER FOUNDATION

Florida Native Wildflower Definition

The Florida Wildflower Foundation defines “Florida native wildflower” as any flowering herbaceous species that grew wild within the state’s natural ecosystems in the 1560s when Florida’s first botanical records were created. The Foundation is also an advocate for flowering native shrubs, vines, trees, grasses and grass-like plants.

It also recognizes as a “Florida native wildflower”:

- Species that may have been introduced prior to the 1560s by Native Americans through trade and travel.
- Species introduced to Florida without the aid of human intervention (for example, via tropical storms, floods, animals, insects, etc.), regardless of when these species were first officially documented.
- Any cultivated selection or horticultural variety that: 1) meets the criteria described in this document, 2) was collected in a natural Florida ecosystem, *and* 2) was not intentionally manipulated to alter any characteristic.

However, in considering a plant’s nativity to Florida, the Foundation allows ample room for the vast gray area that lies between what is believed to be botanically and historically correct and what we do not – and may never – know. Hence, while the Foundation uses the “Guide to the Vascular Plants of Florida,” Second Edition (2003, R.P. Wunderlin and B.F. Hansen; University Press of Florida, Gainesville) as a guide regarding a species’ native status, it does not automatically exclude wildflowers as being native to Florida simply because they lie within this gray area.

Furthermore, the Foundation fully recognizes that change is inevitable. We may be positive of a plant’s native or non-native status until modern-day research brings forth new facts. For this reason, the Foundation welcomes open discussion based on substantiated scientific or historic evidence.

FWF Native Wildflower Task Force, 2010*

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Florida Native Wildflower Cultivar Definition

The Foundation defines a cultivar as stated in *Hortus* third¹: “A cultivar is a horticultural variety or race that has originated and persisted under cultivation, not necessarily referable to a botanical species, and of botanical or horticultural importance, requiring a name.”

The Foundation considers a wildflower cultivar as native to Florida if it meets the following two criteria:

1. The plant is a naturally occurring variant of a Florida native wildflower² that originated within one of Florida’s natural ecosystems, even if that ecosystem is within a Florida ecoregion that extends beyond Florida’s political borders (see ecoregion map on next page). Also acceptable are variants discovered in a nursery or seed crop provided that the native wildflower(s) used to establish that crop originated within one of Florida’s natural ecosystems as described above.
2. The native wildflower variant must have been propagated “as is” and not have been deliberately manipulated in any manner. Manipulation includes but is not limited to hybridization with other plants and subjecting the plants to any process to select for particular characteristics.

Regarding the use of native wildflower cultivars, the Foundation:

1. Only supports their use in residential or commercial landscapes. The planting site should be as closely matched as possible to the ecoregion origin of the native wildflower cultivar. However, it is possible that planting site may actually be more typical of an adjacent ecoregion. Hence, it is important to know as much as possible about the source of the cultivar with respect to the habitat and area of the state in which it originated.
2. Strongly encourages the use of native wildflowers that are not cultivars because of the potential negative ecological impacts if a popular native wildflower cultivar is overused.

And finally, the Foundation recognizes that:

- A cultivar name may be the result of a plant patent, a registered trademark, or simply an unregistered name assigned by the grower. In the latter two cases, the same cultivar conceivably could have different names.
- Wildflowers sold at large retail outlets are cultivars that have undergone an intense selection process focused mainly on showiness, not necessarily survival under Florida conditions. Many local garden centers sell these same cultivars. Such cultivars are not necessarily sold or labeled by their cultivar name; they may be labeled or sold simply as black-eyed susan, tickseed, blanketflower, etc.

NOTE: Some wildflower cultivars have double flowers – the plant’s reproductive parts have been converted into petals. While very showy, such cultivars serve no benefit to insects that rely on these plants for pollen.



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This map presents the Florida ecoregions, as defined by The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) U.S. ecoregional planning teams, to provide ecological context and planning units for TNC conservation projects. TNC also has maps showing the range of all 92 ecoregions identified for the US. This map was originally produced for the Florida Association of Native Nurseries (FANN) by Kathy Freeman GIS Technician, TNC Florida Chapter Office, and is used with the permission of TNC and FANN.



¹ Bailey Hortorium, Staff. 1976. *Hortus third: a concise dictionary of plants cultivated in the United States and Canada*. New York: Macmillan.

² The Foundation's Florida native wildflower definition.

FWF Cultivar Task Force, September 2010

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