

Blanketflower

(*Gaillardia pulchella*)

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

Also known as Indian blanket or Firewheel, Blanketflower occurs throughout Florida in dry savannahs, coastal dunes and other dry, open areas. It blooms in spring, summer and into fall in North Florida, and year-round in Central and South Florida. Its colorful blooms attract a variety of pollinating insects.

Blanketflower's ray florets are typically bicolored with an inner red band surrounded by an outer yellow band. However, flowers can also be entirely red or yellow, have an inner band surrounded by a white band, or, on rare occasion, be entirely white or yellow. Rarely, ray florets may be tubular — narrow at the base and flaring out like trumpets. The flower's center disk florets are dark red to purplish. Leaves are linear to lanceolate, deeply lobed and pubescent, which makes the plant appear grayish-green. Leaves are alternately arranged.



Photo by Stacey Matrazzo

Family: Asteraceae (Aster, daisy or composite family)

Native range: Scattered throughout Florida in 27 counties but favoring the East Coast.

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

Hardiness: Zones 8A–11

Soil: Dry to slightly dry, well-drained sandy soils

Exposure: Full sun

Growth habit: 12–18" tall; can easily spread to twice that width

Propagation: Seed

Garden tips: Blanketflower's brightly colored flowers, long blooming season and drought tolerance make this a popular garden plant. It is relatively pest and disease free, and does well in difficult conditions such as coastal landscapes, roadsides and parking lots. Use it where it can be allowed to spread, as it can be a very aggressive self-seeder.

Caution: Varieties sold at many large retail outlets and garden centers, and by national wildflower seed companies, are usually nonnative *G. aristata* or varieties of *G. pulchella* or *Gaillardia x grandiflora* (a hybrid of *G. pulchella* and *G. aristata*). Avoid planting these in the vicinity of Florida native ecotype *G. pulchella* as they may hybridize.

Seeds are often available from the Florida Wildflowers Growers Cooperative at www.FloridaWildflowers.com. Plants are occasionally available at nurseries that specialize in native plants. Visit PlantRealFlorida.org to find a native nursery on your area.