

Scarlet hibiscus

(*Hibiscus coccineus*)

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

Scarlet hibiscus (also known as Scarlet rosemallow) is an herbaceous to semi-woody perennial wildflower that is common along wetland and stream edges, and in swamps and other wet, open sites. In late summer, it produces large, crimson blooms that remain open for only one day. Scarlet rosemallow is a profuse bloomer, however, and will typically produce many flowers throughout the summer. The plant is a larval host for several butterflies and moths including the Painter lady and Tropical checkered skipper butterflies and the lo moth. The flowers are very attractive to hummingbirds, butterflies and other pollinators.



Photo by Stacey Matrazzo

Scarlet hibiscus flowers are large (4 to 8 inches in diameter) with five bright red petals, a five-lobed green calyx, and linear bracts. Flowers are born in leaf axils. Leaves are glabrous, palmate and deeply lobed with long petioles. Margins are toothed, and leaf arrangement is alternate. Stems and petioles may be reddish. Seeds are born in ovoid five-celled capsules. Each cell may contain many seeds.

The genus name *Hibiscus* is from the Greek *hibiskos*, or “mallow.” The species epithet *coccineus* is from the Greek *kókkinos*, meaning “scarlet red.”

Family: Malvaceae (Mallow family)

Native range: Eastern Panhandle, north and central peninsula, Collier, Broward and Okaloosa counties

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

Hardiness: Zones 8A–11

Lifespan: Perennial

Soil: Moist to wet or inundated, rich soils; can be acclimated to well-drained soils with enough moisture

Exposure: Full sun to partial shade

Growth habit: 3–7'+ tall with 2–5' spread

Propagation: Seeds, cuttings

Garden tips: Scarlet hibiscus is one of our showiest native wildflowers. It is a great addition to any moist or wet landscape or in areas that receive plenty of sun. It also does well in a container. The plant will die back in the winter and should be pruned or mowed to the ground in the fall as it goes dormant. It has no known pests.

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.



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