

# Axilflower

(*Mecardonia acuminata*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary\\_of\\_botanical\\_terms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms).

Axilflower is a common but often overlooked perennial wildflower found in moist open habitats. The plant rarely reaches a height of more than 6 inches and is frequently horizontal. It blooms spring through fall (sometimes year-round) and attracts mainly bees. Three subspecies occur in Florida: The most common, *M. acuminata* subsp. *acuminata*, is found from the Panhandle through Central Florida. *M. acuminata* subsp. *peninsularis* is endemic to the peninsula and occurs from Levy, Marion and Volusia counties south to the Florida Keys, and in Lafayette County. *M. acuminata* subsp. *microphyla*, the rarest of the three, has been documented only in Calhoun and Washington counties.



Photo by Bob Peterson

Axilflower's tubular blooms have five white or pink-tinged lobes and a hairy, pink-veined throat. Flowers are solitary, pedicellate and axillary. The calyx is also five-lobed. Leaves are thick, dark grayish-green and elliptic to lanceolate with pointed or toothed apices. They may be sessile or have short petioles and are oppositely arranged. Leaf margins may be toothed or entire. Stems are smooth and generally procumbent. Seeds are born in ovoid capsules. The plant turns black as it dries, earning it another common name: Blackening hedge hyssop.

The genus *Mecardonia* was formerly classified in the Scrophulariaceae (Snapdragon or figwort) family. Its name pays homage to Antonio Meca y Cardona, an 18th century Spanish patron of the botanical arts. The species epithet *acuminata* is from the Latin *acumen*, or "sharpened," and refers to the leaf apex.

**Family:** Plantaginaceae (Plantain)

**Native range:** Throughout Florida (see note above on subspecies distribution)

To see where natural populations of Wild strawberry have been vouchered, visit [www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu](http://www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu).

**Hardiness:** Zones 8–11

**Lifespan:** Perennial

**Soil:** Moist to wet sandy soils

**Exposure:** Full sun to minimal shade

**Growth habit:** ±6" tall, equally wide or wider; often procumbent

**Propagation:** Seed, division, cuttings

**Garden tips:** Axilflower's horizontal growth habit and tendency to spread make it a good choice for moist to wet open habitats such as pond or marsh edges. It also does well in a container.

Axilflower plants are rarely available from nurseries that specialize in Florida native plants. Visit [www.PlantRealFlorida.org](http://www.PlantRealFlorida.org) to find a nursery in your area.