

# False garlic

(*Nothoscordum bivalve*)

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

False garlic is a grasslike perennial with attractive star-shaped flowers. It typically blooms late winter through spring, but may bloom again in or continue blooming into fall. The unscented flowers attract a variety of pollinators, including small butterflies and native bees. The plant occurs naturally in moist woodlands and grasslands and along roadsides in North and Central Florida.

False garlic's flowers have six erect or spreading whitish tepals, each with a distinct midvein that is greenish-yellow on the upper surface and reddish-purple on the underside. Tepal bases are greenish-yellow, as is the superior ovary. Stamens number six with large yellow-orange anthers. The inflorescence is a terminal umbel consisting of three to six or more flowers. Leaves are long, linear and basal. Leaf blades are smooth with parallel venation. Margins are entire. The plant arises from a fleshy underground bulb. Stems are sheathed. Seeds are born in capsules.

False garlic is also known as Crowpoison and was formerly listed as *Allium bivalve*. The plant is often confused with Wild garlic (*Allium canadense*), but False garlic tends to have fewer flowers and lacks the telltale onion/garlic smell of Wild garlic. And unlike Wild garlic, False garlic is not edible and may be toxic if consumed. Both are former members of the Amaryllidaceae, Liliaceae and Alliaceae families. Current taxonomy treats Alliaceae as Alloideae, a subfamily of Amaryllidaceae. Some botanists still accept Alliaceae as its own family and place both *Nothoscordum* and *Allium* within it.

**Family:** Amaryllidaceae (Amaryllis or daffodil family)

**Native range:** Panhandle, peninsula to Brevard and Hillsborough counties, Lee County  
To see where natural populations of False garlic have been vouchered, visit [www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu](http://www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu).

**Hardiness:** Zones 8A–10A

**Lifespan:** Perennial

**Soil:** Moist well-drained soils

**Exposure:** Full sun to minimal shade

**Growth habit:** 1–2' tall

**Propagation:** Seed

**Garden tips:** False garlic is generally not available commercially. Look for it in a natural area, or consider its twin, Wild garlic, as a possible alternative for your landscape.



Photo by Eleanor Dietrich