

Goldenclub

(*Orontium aquaticum*)

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

Goldenclub is a peculiar perennial wildflower found in shallow swamps, streams and ponds throughout much of Florida. It blooms in winter and spring, and is pollinated primarily by bees, flies and beetles.

Goldenclub's intriguing inflorescence is like no other. It consists of a thin, fleshy stalk that has a reddish base, white middle and golden tip, or spadix, where its tiny yellow flowers are born. There is no perianth. The bluish-green leaves are basal, petiolate and elliptic to oblong. They are wide (between 2 and 4 inches) and long (up to 12 inches) with entire margins and a velvety surface that repels water (hence another common name, Neverwet). The plant spreads by underground rhizomes. Its fruit is a berry.



Photo by Stacey Matrazzo

Goldenclub is high in calcium oxalate, making the entire plant toxic if consumed raw. (It will irritate the mouth and digestive tract.) Cooking and drying will eliminate the toxin. The seeds and flowers are edible, but must be dried and boiled in multiple changes of water. The root can be boiled or dried and ground into a flour.

Orontium aquaticum is the only living species in its genus. Other *Orontium* species are extinct.

Family: Araceae (Arum family)

Native range: Nearly throughout, except southernmost counties

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

Hardiness: Zones 8A–10B

Lifespan: Perennial

Soil: Wet to inundated, acidic sand, loam or muck

Exposure: Full sun to full shade

Growth habit: 1–2' tall, up to 3' wide

Propagation: Division

Garden tips: Goldenclub is suitable for use in wetland gardens and along pond or stream edges. It does best in flowing water.

Goldenclub is occasionally available from nurseries that specialize in Florida native plants. Visit www.PlantRealFlorida.org to find a nursery in your area.