

# Violet butterwort

(*Pinguicula ionantha*)

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

Also known as Godfrey's butterwort, violet butterwort is a rare perennial insectivorous plant that typically blooms between February and April. It is endemic to only Bay, Franklin, Gulf, Liberty and Wakulla counties in the Florida Panhandle, and occurs naturally in wet prairies, bogs, seepage slopes and wet pine flatwoods. It is a state-endangered and U.S.-threatened species. Threats to this plant include fire exclusion, drought and habitat loss.

Violet butterwort's solitary bloom may be pale violet to nearly white with five notched petals. The corolla is slightly tubular with a deep violet throat and violet veination. It is borne on an erect leafless scape that arises from a basal rosette of succulent yellowish-green leaves. Leaf margins are entire and involute. The scape, sepals and leaves are covered in tiny hairs. The hairs on the leaf surface secrete a sticky mucilage in which insects become trapped. (Insects often mistake the mucilage for drops of water.) Enzymes are then secreted to help the plant digest the insects. The ability to trap and digest insects allows violet butterwort (like most insectivorous plants) to survive in nutrient-deficient conditions. Subsequently, it helps prevent insect predation.

The genus name, *Pinguicula*, comes from the Latin *pinguis*, which means "fat" and alludes to the greasy feeling of the leaf surface. The species epithet, *ionantha*, references the Latin word *ianthinus*, or "violet."

**Family:** Lentibulariaceae (Bladderwort family)

**Native range:** Central and Eastern Panhandle

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

**Soil:** Moist to inundated, acidic soils with poor nutrients

**Growth habit:** About 6" tall

**Propagation:** Seed

**Garden tips:** Although not commercially available, Violet butterwort can be propagated by seed.

Getting seed, however, may be challenging as it cannot be collected from public natural lands. Your best bet is to find someone who has it growing on privately owned land. Be sure to get permission before collecting on private land.



Photo by Eleanor Dietrich



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