

Pickerelweed

(*Pontederia cordata*)

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

Pickerelweed is a long-lived, perennial aquatic wildflower that occurs naturally in open, aquatic habitats such as pond, lake or river edges, marshes and swamps. It typically blooms in spring through summer and is pollinated primarily by bees, but is visited by many butterflies and other insects. Its seeds are eaten by birds. Ducks are known to eat the entire plant.

Pickerelweed's conspicuous blooms are born in erect, showy spikes. Flowers are tubular with deep purplish-blue petals that often bear yellow and white markings that may serve as nectar guides for bees. Flower spikes extend above all but one leaf. Leaves are sagittate with a long, tapering blade and a cordate base (hence the species name *cordata*). They are dark green and alternately arranged. The fruit is an achene that bears a single inconspicuous seed.

Pickerelweed seeds, stalks and leaves are edible to humans. Seeds can be eaten raw, boiled or roasted. Young leaves and stalks can be eaten raw or boiled.



Photo by R. W. Smith,
Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Family: Pontederiaceae

Native range: Nearly throughout Florida

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

Hardiness: Zones 8A–10B

Soil: Inundated to saturated soils

Exposure: Full sun to partial shade

Growth habit: 2–4'

Propagation: Seeds, division

Garden tips: Pickerelweed is great for water gardens as well as pond edges and drainage swales, where it can also help with soil stabilization. It flowers best if grown in full sun. It is fast-growing and spreads easily on its own by underground rhizomes, forming large colonies if not maintained.



Photo by Alan Cressler, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Pickerelweed plants are often available at nurseries that specialize in native plants. Visit PlantRealFlorida.org to find a native nursery on your area.