

Small butterwort

(*Pinguicula pumila*)

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

Small butterwort is a diminutive, insectivorous wildflower found in wet pinelands and prairies throughout most of Florida. It blooms winter through spring.

Small butterwort's solitary bloom varies in color from pale violet to pink to nearly white (rarely pale yellow). It typically measures no more than 1 inch across. The corolla is funnel-shaped with five petal-like lobes, each notched at the top and occasionally with noticeable venation on the lobe surface. The corolla tube may be purple or yellow with reddish striations. The base of the corolla is spurred and reddish. The base of the corolla is spurred. Flowers are born on erect leafless scapes that arise from basal rosettes of succulent yellowish-green leaves. Leaf margins are entire and involute. The scape, sepals and leaves are covered in tiny glandular hairs. Seeds are born in inconspicuous capsules.



Photo by Eleanor Dietrich

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 Small 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*, meaning "fat." It alludes to the viscous or greasy feeling of the leaf surface. The species epithet *pumila* is from the Latin *pumilus*, or "dwarf."

Family: Lentibulariaceae (Bladderwort family)

Native range: Panhandle from Walton County east, most peninsular counties and the Keys

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

Hardiness: Zones 8A–11B

Lifespan: Perennial

Soil: Moist to inundated acidic soils with poor nutrients

Exposure: Full sun

Growth habit: up to 3' tall

Propagation: Seed

Garden tips: Although not commercially available, Small bladderwort can be propagated by seed. Getting seed, however, may be challenging as they cannot be collected from public natural lands. Your best bet is to find someone who has it growing on his or her land. (Be sure to get permission before collecting on private land.)