

Pale meadowbeauty

(*Rhexia mariana*)

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

Pale meadowbeauty is an herbaceous perennial wildflower with showy blooms that vary in color from white to pink. Flowers have four petals, four sepals, and eight long stamens with curving yellow anthers that extend far beyond the bloom. Leaves are narrowly elliptic to lanceolate with three veins and toothed margins. They are oppositely arranged. Stems are hairy, as is the hypanthium, where the seeds develop. The hypanthium is distinctly urn-shaped and long (see photo), providing a good attribute for identification in all meadowbeauties.

Pale meadowbeauty occurs naturally in wet flatwoods, open savannas, marshes, bogs and wet roadsides. It flowers spring through fall and attracts many pollinators, especially bees. Meadowbeauties are buzz pollinated, a technique in which bees use vibration to remove and collect pollen. Only about 9% of flowers are pollinated in this way. These flowers have unique anthers that are completely sealed except for a small pore at the top or small slits along the sides. The tiny openings prevent insects from entering the anther, but do allow for pollen to exit when the anther is vibrated at specific frequencies. If you listen closely as bees approach the flowers, you can actually hear a change in their buzzing.

Family: Melastomataceae (also Melastomaceae)

Native range: Throughout Florida except Suwannee, St. Johns, St. Lucie, Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade and Monroe counties

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

Hardiness: Zones 8A–10B

Lifespan: Perennial

Soil: Moist, acidic sandy or loamy soils

Exposure: Full sun to partial shade

Growth habit: up to 2' tall

Propagation: Seed, cuttings

Garden tips: Although it is not common in the commercial market and is not easily propagated, pale meadowbeauty can do well in a landscape with moist soils. It will sucker and can colonize, but it is not aggressive and will not outcompete other wildflowers.

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



Photo by Eleanor Dietrich



Urn-shaped hypanthium after petals have fallen off. Once seeds develop and disperse, it will turn brown and brittle. Photo by Stacey Matrazzo