

Fringed meadowbeauty

(*Rhexia petiolata*)

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

Fringed meadowbeauty is an herbaceous perennial wildflower. Its showy pink blooms have four petals, five sepals and eight short stamens with yellow anthers. Petal margins are wavy. Leaves are ovate, petiolate and have ciliate margins. They are oppositely arranged. Stems are glabrous, as is the hypanthium, where the seeds develop. The hypanthium is distinctly urn-shaped, providing a good attribute for identification in all meadowbeauties.

It occurs naturally in wet prairies, bogs and flatwoods, and along coastal swales. It flowers spring through summer 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!

Fringed meadowbeauty is often confused with Nuttall's meadowbeauty (*Rhexia nuttallii*), which occurs in similar habitats and geographic range. The hypanthium of Nuttall's meadowbeauty, however, is covered in conspicuous hairs, while fringed meadowbeauty's is smooth.

Family: Melastomataceae (also Melastomaceae)

Native range: Panhandle, north and central peninsula, and Lee and Collier counties

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

Hardiness: Zones 8A–10A

Lifespan: Perennial

Soil: Moist, acidic soils

Exposure: Full sun to minimal shade

Growth habit: up to 2' tall

Propagation: Seed

Fringed meadowbeauty is not commercially cultivated and does not persist in the landscape. Look for it in its natural setting.

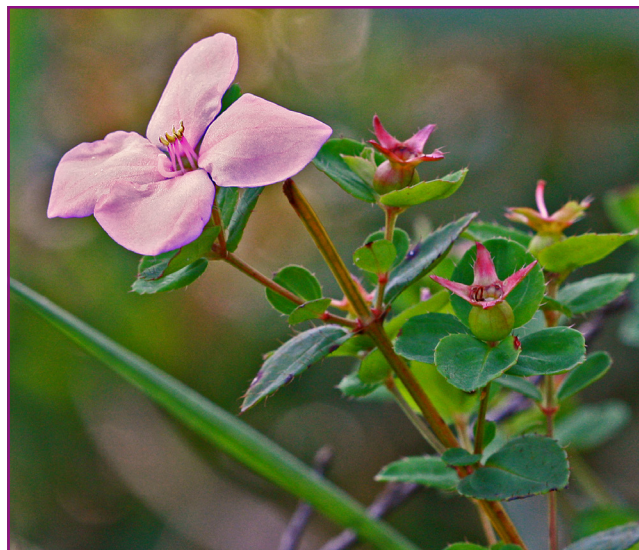


Photo by Mary Keim



Fringed meadowbeauty's ciliate leaf margins and smooth hypanthium. Photo by Eleanor Dietrich



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