

Pinkscale gayfeather

(*Liatris elegans*)

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

In fall, Florida's natural areas and roadsides light up with flares of bright purple from our 17 native *Liatris* species. Among them, Pinkscale gayfeather (also called Elegant blazing star), is one of the most beautiful and unique. Its national range extends from South Carolina to Texas and inland to Arkansas and Oklahoma. It inhabits open upland areas such as sandhills and roadsides. Butterflies and bees are attracted in abundance to its flowers and feed on the nectar they provide.

Basal leaves are large and narrowly oblanceolate, while stem leaves are reduced and become deflexed toward the flower spike. Stem is puberulent to hirsute-puberulent. Flowerheads are dense spikes. The flowers are unique among *Liatris* species in that small white disk flowers are surrounded by pinkish-lavender bracts. The seeds are also unique in that the appendages at the back of ripened seeds are feathery.

Family: Asteraceae (Aster, composite or daisy family)

Native range: North Florida south the Pasco County

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

Lifespan: Short-lived perennial

Soil: Well-drained sand or loam

Exposure: Full sun

Growth habit: Erect, up to 4 feet

Propagation: Seed

Florida regions of landscape suitability: North, Central

Garden tips: While the plant does require a well-drained site, in the right conditions it makes a great addition to a mixed pollinator garden. It goes dormant in winter, and emerges in spring when flower stalks will begin to grow. The flower spikes can make the plant top-heavy, so plant with other tall species, such as grasses, goldenrods and other *Liatris* species that can help support the plant and keep it upright.

Plants are available from nurseries that specialize in Florida native plants.

Visit www.PlantRealFlorida.org to find a nursery in your area.

Seeds may be available from the Florida Wildflower Cooperative at www.FloridaWildflowers.com.



Photos by Emily Bell

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