

Blueflower butterwort

(*Pinguicula caerulea*)

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

Blueflower butterwort is an insectivorous wildflower that typically blooms between January and May. It occurs naturally in bogs and low pinelands throughout much of the Florida peninsula. It is a state-threatened species and is susceptible to drought conditions, drainage, habitat loss and illegal collection.



Photo by Mary Keim

Blueflower butterwort's blooms are blue to purplish-blue with notched, veined petals and a dark, tubular throat. Flowers are solitary and borne 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 hairs. The hairs on the leaf surface secrete a sticky mucilage in which insects become trapped. (Insects often mistake the mucilage for drops of water.) The leaf margins curl over the trapped insect. Enzymes are then secreted to help the plant digest its prey. The ability to trap and digest insects allows blueflower butterwort (like most insectivorous plants) to survive in nutrient-deficient conditions. Subsequently, it helps prevent insect predation. Blueflower butterwort seeds are born in inconspicuous capsules.

The genus name, *Pinguicula*, comes from the Latin *pinguis*, which means "fat" and alludes to the greasy feeling of the leaf surface. The species epithet, *caerulea*, references the Latin word *caerulus*, which means "from the sky or sea," referring to the blue color. The common name, butterwort, comes from the historic use of the leaves for curdling milk.

Family: Lentibulariaceae (Bladderwort family)

Native range: Most of peninsular Florida

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

Hardiness: Zones 8A–9B

Lifespan: Perennial

Soil: Wet to moist, low-nutrient acidic soils

Exposure: Full sun

Growth habit: 4–12" tall

Propagation: Seed

Blueflower butterwort is not commercially available. Visit a natural area to see them.



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