

Black-eyed Susan

(*Rudbeckia hirta*)

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

Black-eyed Susan is a bright, cheerful wildflower found throughout Florida in sandhills, flatwoods and disturbed areas. It is an excellent nectar source for a variety of butterflies and bees and is also a larval host to some moths. The seeds are eaten by birds.

Black-eyed Susan's compound flowerhead consists of many long yellow ray florets surrounding a central dome of dark purple to brown disk florets. Each solitary flowerhead is born on a rough, erect stem that emerges from a basal rosette of bristly leaves. Stem leaves are alternately arranged, with toothed margins and rough surfaces. Seeds are tiny black achenes.

Cut flowers can last up to 10 days in bouquets. Black-eyed Susan roots have also been used in various medicines.

Family: Asteraceae (Aster or Composite family)

Native range: Nearly throughout Florida

To see where natural populations of Black-eyed Susan have been vouchered, visit www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.

Lifespan: Perennial, biennial, or annual

Soil: Rich, well-drained soils

Exposure: Full sun to minimal shade

Growth habit: 1–3' tall with 1–2' spread

Propagation: Seeds

Florida regions of landscape suitability: North, Central, South

Garden Tips: Black-eyed Susans are easy to grow and maintain. They spread by way of abundant self-sown seed. They are adaptable to both dry and moist sites, but flower best with regular moisture. Depending on the conditions, they can perform as a short-lived perennial, biennial or annual. Black-eyed Susan is excellent for mixed wildflower gardens, and disturbed areas such as roadsides and medians.

Caution: There are many named cultivars of *Rudbeckia* species, and some are quite popular and widely available. None of the cultivars currently available were derived from Florida ecotypes, and they are not considered native wildflowers. They may not perform as well or live as long as those from your local region.

Black-eyed Susan seeds are available from the Florida Wildflower Growers Cooperative. Plants are often available at nurseries that specialize in native plants. Visit www.PlantRealFlorida.org to find a native nursery in your area.



Photo by Emily Bell