

Manyflower beardtongue

(*Penstemon multiflorus*)

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

Manyflower beardtongue (also known as White beardtongue) is a deciduous perennial wildflower. It blooms in spring and summer and occurs naturally in flatwoods, sandhills, scrubby flatwoods and ruderal areas. Manyflower beardtongue is almost endemic to Florida, with only a few populations in Alabama and Georgia. It attracts a number of pollinators, including hummingbirds, and is the host plant for the Baltimore checkerspot (*Euphydryas phaeton*).



Photo by Eleanor Dietrich

The plant's showy white to light lavender flowers are born in terminal panicles on oppositely arranged stalks. Each flower is 5-lobed, 2-lipped and tube-shaped. Calyces are 5-lobed and hairy. Stems are erect, reddish in color and emerge from a basal rosette of large, grayish-green leaves. Stem leaves are sessile and oblong to lanceolate with entire or slightly toothed margins. They are oppositely arranged and become reduced as they ascend the stem.

The species epithet *multiflorus* is from the Latin *multus*, or "many," and *florus*, or "flower," and refers to the many flowers born on each flower stalk. The common name "beardtongue" refers to the tendency of blooms within the *Penstemon* genus to have a long, often hairy filament that protrudes from the mouth of the corolla, giving the appearance of a fuzzy tongue.

Family: Plantaginaceae (Plantain family)

Native range: Nearly throughout Florida

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

Hardiness: Zones 8A–10A

Lifespan: Perennial

Soil: Well-drained soils

Exposure: Full sun to minimal shade

Growth habit: 3–4' tall

Propagation: Seed, cuttings

Garden tips: Manyflower beardtongue works well in wild or naturalistic settings as well more formal gardens. Masses of these tall, white bloom stalks are a showstopper. The plant spreads on its own by reseeding and by producing "pups" from the main rosette.

Manyflower beardtongue seeds are available from the Florida Wildflower Growers Cooperative at www.FloridaWildflowers.com. Plants are often available at nurseries that specialize in native plants. Visit www.PlantRealFlorida.org to find a native nursery on your area.