

Dune sunflower

(*Helianthus debilis*)

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

Dune sunflower occurs naturally along the coast but adapts well for inland use. Its bright flowers attract a variety of pollinators, including butterflies, moths, and bees. Its dense growth pattern provides cover for many small animals, while birds enjoy its seeds.

Blooms consist of brownish-red disk florets surrounded by yellow ray florets. Leaves are deltoid-shaped with rough surfaces and toothed margins. They are alternately arranged.

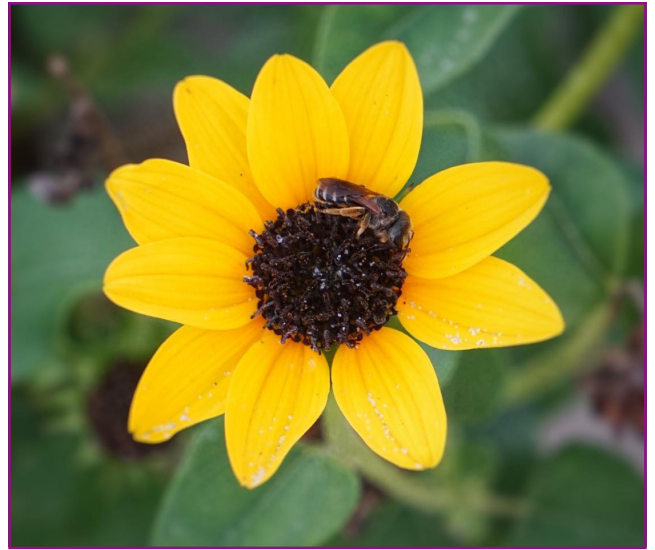


Photo by Emily Bell

Family: Asteraceae (Aster, daisy or composite family)

Native range: *H. debilis* is native only to the counties along the east coast. However, there are two subspecies: cucumberleaf dune sunflower (*H. debilis* subsp. *cucumerifolius*), which is native to scattered counties throughout the Panhandle and a few peninsular counties; and west coast dune sunflower (*H. debilis* subsp. *vestitus*), which is endemic only to Pinellas, Hillsborough, Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte and Lee counties.

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

Lifespan: Short-lived perennial or annual

Soil: Dry, well-drained sandy soils

Exposure: Full sun

Growth habit: 1-2' tall with 3-4' spread

Propagation: Seed, cuttings

Florida regions of landscape suitability: North, Central, South

Garden tips: Dune sunflower can tolerate salt and wind. Plant in full sun for best flowering.

It is a prolific self-seeder and will spread quickly if not maintained. Depending on the variety, this plant may be spreading or upright. As a groundcover, it may sprawl several feet but generally is no more than 2 feet high. West coast dune sunflower can be taller.

Caution: Subspecies can hybridize and should not be planted together. In landscape or garden settings, the subspecies native to/or appropriate for the region should be used. Environmentally conscientious gardeners should ask their nursery for the subspecies native to their locale. This will help preserve the distinct identities and ecological roles of these plants.

Plants are available from nurseries that specialize in Florida native plants. Visit www.PlantRealFlorida.org to find a nursery in your area.

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