

# Pineland heliotrope

(*Euploca polyphylla*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary\\_of\\_botanical\\_terms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms).

Pineland heliotrope is an herbaceous wildflower endemic to Florida. It occurs naturally in pine rocklands, wet prairies, coastal thickets and ruderal areas. It typically blooms throughout the year, but in North Florida, it may bloom only in fall. It produces copious amounts of flowers, attracting a variety of pollinators, especially small butterflies.



Photo by Alan Cressler

Pineland heliotrope's many small flowers may be yellow or white and are born on distinctly curved spikes. The yellow-flowered form tends to be erect and upright, while the white-flowered form has a more prostrate and creeping habit. Though the two forms are quite distinct in growth habit, they are considered one species with no varietal status. Stems are pubescent. Leaves are narrowly elliptic to 1 inch long and sessile with a smooth upper surface and densely pubescent underside. They are alternately arranged. The fruit is a small schizocarp containing up to four nutlets.

This plant was reclassified as *Euploca polyphylla*, although many sources still refer to its original name, *Heliotropium polyphyllum*. The yellow and white flower forms were once separated into two genera: *H. polyphyllum* (white) and *H. leavenworthii* (yellow). The common name "heliotrope" (as well as the original genus name *Heliotropium*) comes from the Greek *helios*, or "sun," and *trepein*, or "to turn." It refers to the belief that the plants turn their flowers toward the sun.

**Family:** Boraginaceae (Borage or forget-me-not family)

**Native range:** Peninsula south into the Keys and Escambia County

To see where natural populations of Pineland heliotrope have been vouchered, visit [www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu](http://www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu).

**Lifespan:** Perennial

**Soil:** Moist to moderately dry sandy soils

**Exposure:** Full sun to minimal shade

**Growth habit:** 6–12" tall (1–3" for prostrate form) and much wider

**Propagation:** Cuttings, seeds (seeds are difficult to germinate)

**Florida regions of landscape suitability:** North, Central, South

**Garden tips:** Pineland heliotrope is adaptable to many growing conditions, making it an excellent addition to butterfly and wildflower gardens, as well as in the home landscape. It suckers and can form large patches, making it a great low groundcover. It is drought tolerant and can grow in nutrient-poor soils but is not particularly salt tolerant.

Pineland heliotrope is often available from nurseries that specialize in Florida native plants. Visit [www.PlantRealFlorida.org](http://www.PlantRealFlorida.org) to find a nursery in your area.

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