

# Purple lovegrass

(*Eragrostis spectabilis*)

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

Purple lovegrass is a perennial bunchgrass that occurs naturally in pine flatwoods, dry woodlands and disturbed areas throughout Florida. In late summer and fall, its delicate flowers appear in such abundance that they cover the plant in a billowy purple haze. Its seeds are tiny yet prolific, providing nutritious forage for songbirds and small mammals, which use the dense foliage for cover, as well. The plant is a larval host for the Zabulon skipper (*Poanes zabulon*).



Photo by Mary Keim

Purple lovegrass flowers are small, bright purple to pink and born in wispy panicles. Leaves are long, linear, erect and dull green with hairs on both sides, making them rough. Its fruits are dry, one-seeded caryopses, typical of grasses. Seeds may be dispersed by wind, gravity or on the fur of passing animals.

The genus name of *Eragrostis* comes from the Greek *eros*, or “love,” and *agrostis*, meaning “grass” (hence the common name). The species epithet *spectabilis* is Latin for showy or spectacular and refers to the plant’s vibrant display when in flower.

**Family:** Poaceae (Grass family)

**Native range:** Throughout Florida

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

**Lifespan:** Perennial

**Soil:** Moist to dry, well-drained sandy soils

**Exposure:** Full sun

**Growth habit:** 1–2’ tall, equally broad

**Propagation:** Seed, division

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

**Garden tips:** Purple lovegrass can tolerate a variety of conditions. It does well in nutrient-poor soils and is drought-tolerant. Its clump-forming habit makes it a great choice for mass or border plantings, as well as in a mixed wildflower meadow. The plant is winter dormant.

Purple lovegrass is available from nurseries that specialize in Florida native plants. Visit [www.PlantRealFlorida.org](http://www.PlantRealFlorida.org) to find a nursery in your area. Seeds may be available from the Florida Wildflower Growers Cooperative at [www.FloridaWildflowers.com](http://www.FloridaWildflowers.com).

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