

Snowberry

(*Chiococca alba*)

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

Snowberry is a robust evergreen vinelike shrub that occurs naturally in pine rocklands, shell mounds and coastal strands and hammocks. Its fragrant flowers typically bloom spring through fall, but may bloom year-round. Its showy white fruits also are usually present. This plant is a larval host for the endangered Miami blue butterfly (*Cyclargus thomasi*) and Snowberry clearwing moth (*Hemaris diffinis*). Its flowers provide nectar for a variety of insects, and its berries are consumed by birds and other wildlife.

Snowberry's yellow to creamy white flowers are small (up to $\frac{1}{2}$ "), five-lobed and bell-shaped. They are born in panicles. Leaves are dark green with entire margins and are oppositely arranged. They may be elliptic, ovate or broadly lanceolate. Stems are angled and woody. Branches are slim and vinelike. Fruits are white, round or oblong drupes.

The genus name *Chiococca* comes from the Greek *chion*, meaning "snow," and *kokkos*, meaning "kernel" or "berry." The species epithet *alba* is Latin for "white." Both names refer to the color of its berries.

Family: Rubiaceae (Coffee, bedstraw or madder family)

Native range: Most coastal peninsular counties

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

Lifespan: Perennial

Soil: Moderately moist to very dry, well-drained sandy or calcareous soils

Exposure: Partial shade

Growth habit: 6–10' tall and equally wide

Propagation: Seed, cuttings

Florida regions of landscape suitability: North, Central, South

Garden tips: Snowberry's habit varies between shrub and vine. It can be aggressive in the garden so is better suited for naturalistic or restoration landscapes; however, it also works well as a buffer plant. It is both salt and drought tolerant.

Snowberry 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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Photo by Bob Peterson