

Fall Flowers of Hernando selected for your viewing pleasure by Cindy Liberton

Welcome to October

We are fortunate in Hernando to have a variety of habitats that bring Florida's flowers to us throughout the year. But fall may be the most spectacular season for its brilliance and its brevity. Because our county is home to large remnants of the once wide-spread sandhill and pinelands, as well as scrub communities, our natural landscapes feature species that most Floridians never see.

You have to leave home to find them; many native fall flowers are notoriously difficult to propagate for home gardens, and are best viewed in their natural settings in populations. Get out your calendar and your camera; plan your field trip now! By the end of October, many of these species are past their peek.

The list that follows highlights species to look for that typically bloom *only* during this month and in early November, depending on conditions. We are listing them in general categories, and highlighting public lands with good access where you may find the right places to see these plants. Happy hunting!

Fall Bloomers

Sandhills, Scrubs & Ruderal



Garberia
(*Garberia heterophylla*)
An ever green shrub with rose purple blooms in clusters; threatened and endemic to Florida, but found in our Hernando County scrubs.

Blazing Stars and Gayfeathers (*liatris spp.*)

From thin wands, these bright magenta stalks of bloom are unmistakable and found in groups. Telling them apart is another matter. *Teuifolia* is more often found in disturbed soils, *chapmannii* and *tenuifolia* are true scrub and sandhill plants. Look for these where there's healthy populations of wire grass.

Chapman's Blazing Star or Gayfeather
(*Liatris chapmannii*)
Blazing Star - Fewflower Gayfeather
(*Liatris pauciflora*)
Shortleaf Gayfeather
(*Liatris tenuifolia -ruderal*)



Blue Sage (*Salvia azurea*)
A magnificent species, and a shock to the senses. It's tall, its stalks of lobed trumpets are bright deep blue, and it grows in clumps. When you see it, there's no mistaking it.



Yellow buttons or Honeycombhead
(*Balduina angustifolia*) - at Chinsegut
This yellow daisy like flower can be distinguished from the *Chrysopsis* by its short wide petals and thread-like leaves.



Wild Buckwheat
(*Eriogonum tomentosum*)
White-ivory blooms stand tall in clusters on branched inflorescence. Up to a meter tall, its stems are woody.

Pineland False Foxglove
(*Agalinis divaricata*)
Delicate pinkish purple flower on threadlike stalk with short needle like leaves. Look at the photo, and you're sure to recognize it when you find it.

Golden Asters (*Chrysopsis spp.*)
When is a Golden Aster not a Golden Aster? When it's a different Golden Aster, common names are just that—common. And we have at least these five you'll find out and about in October. They're all a golden yellow, usually with hairy leaves and stems raising from a basil foothold. You may have to key these out to be sure, but it's good practice. Dress' Goldenaster is Endemic to FL (*Chrysopsis linearifolia subsp. dressi*). Other, more common species are pictured below.



Coastalplain Goldenaster
(*Chrysopsis scabrella*)



Maryland Goldenaster
(*Chrysopsis mariana*)



Scrubland Goldenaster
(*Chrysopsis subulata*)

Coastal-plain Palafox

(*Palafoxia integrifolia*)

Palafoxia looks like it's curling its fingers; the blush-pink to white star like blooms are thready and complex, on tall thready stems, and worth a study.



Summer-farewell (*Dalea pinnata*)

A great name for a stupendous shrub that often bears snowy, feathery white blooms and red buds simultaneously. Look for short bushy green needle-like leaves.



Flat-topped Goldenrod

(*Euthamia caroliniana*)

Yes, we have lots of goldenrod, but this one blooms now, and can be distinguished by its level-topped clusters. Look closely and see the beauty of individual blooms in the cluster.



Lopsided Indiangrass

(*Sorghastrum secundum*)

Editor's favorite, this grass, in full bloom has yellow bells, maroon flower parts, all mounted on a comb of long threads. Seeing a field of this grass in bloom is not to be missed.

Moist

Narrowleaf/Swamp Sunflowers

(*Helianthus angustifolium*)

There are several sunflowers throughout the year, but look for this one now in wet areas.



Musky mint (*Hyptis alata*) is blooming nicely at Big Pine now. Flowers are independent on stout stalks.



What to Take Along

To be sure of what you're seeing, a field guide to Florida's wildflowers is a handy help. We recommend the following.

Alden, P, Cech, R. B., Keen, R, Leventer, A, Nelson, G. & Zomlefer, W. B. (1998). *National Audubon Society field guide to Florida*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

Bell, C. R. & Taylor, B. J. (1982). *Florida wildflowers and roadside plants*. Chapel Hill, NC: Laurel Hill Press.

Carpheporus

(*Carpheporus spp.*)

We are blessed with three great bloomers in this family in October, and fortunately, they are easy to distinguish, although similarly pinkish-purple. Paint Brush is flat on top, Deer's Tongue is shaped, well, like a tongue, and Vanilla Plant is the sparser of the three, with air in its panicle.



Vanilla Plant
(*Carpheporus odoratissima*)



Florida Paint Brush
(*Carpheporus corymbosus*)



Deer-Tongue
(*Carpheporus paniculatus*)

Throughout the Area

Southern needleleaf, Thin-leaved wild-pine

(*Tillandsia setacea*)

Look up—you may see the flower stalks of wildpine emerging from the bunch of needles in your oak tree. If you can get close, you'll see the flower is quite complex and colorful.



Narrowleaf Bluecurls

(*Trichostema setaceum*)

The long curled filaments, twice as long as the small-lipped blue bloom, give this plant its name. It's a bushy annual, and this is the late blooming variety in our county. Look for it in dry woodlands.

Taylor, W. K. (1992). *The guide to Florida wildflowers*. Lanham, MD: Taylor Trade Publishing.

Taylor, W. K. (1998). *Florida wildflowers in their natural communities*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida