



Common Native Plant Volunteers

Pinellas Chapter - Florida
Native Plant Society

Please note: Most of the photos used for this presentation came from the FNPS, Florida Wildflower Foundation, IRC as well as other noted webpages for each species. Some of our board member's personal photos and other sources were also used. All photos are attributed throughout the presentation and on the final slide.

What is a volunteer native plant?

Within the native plant community we call plants that seed themselves in our yards volunteers.

They volunteered to be part of your landscape, yay, free plants! We just have to know what not to mow over. We hope this presentation will be helpful to native plant beginners that would like to ID these lovely volunteers!

Any guesses?

This one is pretty common and is probably already growing in your yard. It's hard to spot if you mow!



Spiderwort - *Tradescantia ohiensis*

I spot this beauty all the time growing in patches that are not mowed regularly in neighborhoods and along the side of the road/highway.

Note the petal formation as well as shape and color of the leaves for ID purposes.

It's great for pollinators and is happy to greet you with beautiful flowers in the morning, spring thru fall!

Tolerates drought, doesn't like it too wet and does well in full sun to part shade.



Spiderwort stems and leaves. Photo by Emily Bell



© Mark Hutchinson 2012

Note that the leaves look similar to grass, this is why it is hard to find if the grass is mowed short.

Thoughts?

**You'll find this
groundcover growing
just about anywhere;
parking lot medians,
fields, even
curbstrips!**

**You just have to look
for it, I am delighted,
whenever I spot it!**



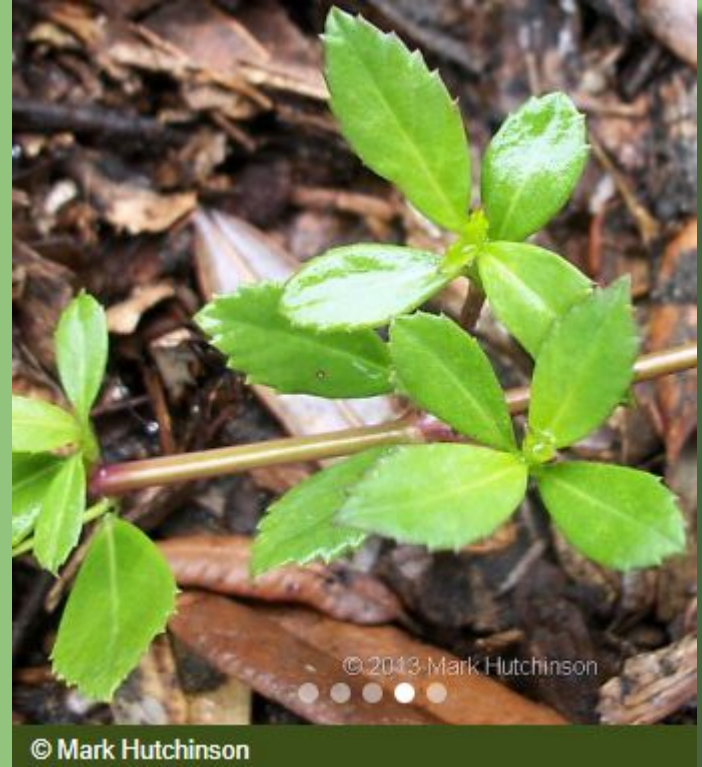
© Marjorie Shropshire

Turkey Tangle Frogfruit - *Phyla nodiflora*

One of the best common plant names ever! Also known as matchweed, this ground cover is a great turf replacement as it grows in dense mats when mowed. Note it's serrated leaves and match head like flowers that are purple and white. Just gorgeous!



Phyla nodiflora is happy in full sun to part shade and likes a bit of moisture but not constant inundation. It is the larval host for common buckeye (*Junonia coenia*), phaeon crescent (*Phyciodes phaeon*) and white peacock (*Anartia jatrophae*) butterflies.



Who is this beauty?

It's here to let you know it is spring! I was so delighted to find out this plant grows in my yard readily when I bought my house.

So dainty and delicate definitely one of my seasonal favorites!



Canadian Toadflax - *Linaria canadensis*

Another great reason not to mow in the spring or use herbicides in lawns!

Toadflax varies in color from light pink to medium purple and even white!

They like full sun or part shade and bloom in the early spring. Note the long slender stem with a grouping of flowers at the top. The leaves are linear and mostly at the bottom of the stem.

Unfortunately, once it heats up they disappear. Enjoy them while you can!



Canadian toadflax (*Linaria canadensis*) along an Orlando-area roadside. Photo by Jeff Norcini



Canadian toadflax (*Linaria canadensis*). Photo by Stacey Matrazzo

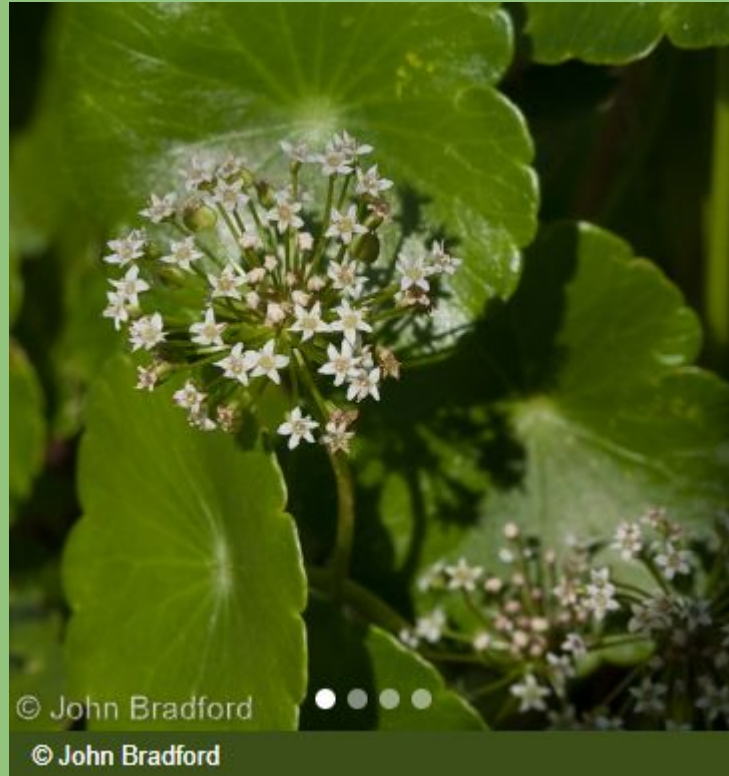


Photo by - Tabatha S.

Did you know that this ground cover is native?

Pops up in lawns all the time, moisture loving and super cute tiny flowers!

For some reason people really dislike it. If you do an internet search the first options are how to control and kill it, unfortunately.



Manyflower Marsh Penny-wort - *Hydrocotyle umbellata*

Also known as Dollarweed - let's start a trend to stop using this common name! If one is not a fan of it in their yard, odds are they just need to turn down their irrigation, no need to use herbicides. If it persists leave it, the bees like it! This native groundcover tolerates mowing.

There are several species of *Hydrocotyle* in Florida, most are native be sure to get a proper ID. For more information visit <https://florida.plantatlas.usf.edu/genus/622>.



What lovely stems you have!

Birds love it, giant leopard
moths host on it.

Who could it be?



Pokeweed - *Phytolacca americana*

Stunning purple/pink stems, large dark green leaves and birds gobble up the berries.

Pokeweed gets large, can be 4-8' tall and just as wide.

Please note this plant does have toxicity, caution should be used if children or pets use the area it is growing in.

The leaves can be eaten *IF* prepared properly.



Photo by Tabatha S.

So tiny and such a lovely little groundcover!

Another one of my favorites that I found in the yard when I moved in to my house!

Here's a hint, those leaves almost look hoof shaped.



Photo by Emily Bell

Carolina ponysfoot - *Dichondra carolinensis*

Likes moisture and can grow in part shade to full sun. The sunnier the spot the more moisture it would need. If it gets too hot or dry it will disappear.

Mixes well with frogfruit and is edible.



Copyright by: Shirley Denton



Photo by Tabatha S.

Another seasonal treat!

This one is edible - could add a kick to a dish or salad!

There are two other natives in this picture. One has gone to seed (toadflax) and the other we'll talk about in a few slides.



Photo by Tabatha S.

Virginia Pepperweed - *Lepidium virginicum*

You'll find this native plant just about everywhere if there is full sun and well drained soil.

In the mustard family, the young leaves are edible and the seeds can be a substitute for black pepper.

Grows spring into mid-summer.



Is that a clover? No. What could it be?

Sometimes confused with clover due to the leaf formation though the flowers are not similar.

I still feel lucky to have it volunteer in my yard!



© Shirlev Denton

Common Yellow Woodsorrel - *Oxalis corniculata*

Dormant in the winter, this little cutie makes a nice addition to a freedom lawn. I leave it be when it pops up in my native yard as well.

Be careful not to confuse it with Pink Woodsorrel, *Oxalis debilis*, before it flowers. This is a highly aggressive non-native weed.

Personally I find the *Oxalis corniculata* much better behaved than it's non-native relative.



Photo by Tabatha S.



Copyright by: Beryn Harty
Monroe County, Florida, 2014



© Dick Diener

Guess who?

One of our native plants that is in the succulent family.

This makes a lovely ground cover but you've probably seen it's relatives in hanging baskets at box stores.

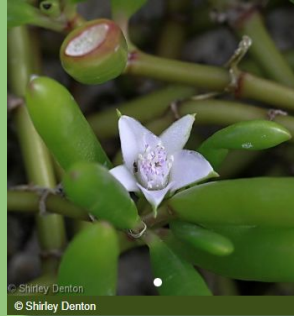


Kiss-me-quick/Pink Purslane - *Portulaca pilosa*

We have at least three native species of purslane, shown are pink - *portulaca pilosa* and sea - *Sesuvium portulacastrum*.

Sea purslane is an excellent choice for a salt tolerant ground cover. Though it may not readily volunteer like the pink purslane.

Be careful not to confuse the non-native pink flowered purslane (*Portulaca amilis*) with the native.



Who might you be?

This is a native vine/ground cover that birds and squirrels love for its fruit.

Hint: Humans like this type of fruit too but a bigger version.



© Susan Trammel

Corkystem Passion-flower - *Passiflora suberosa*

This vine is adorable with its tiny flowers and itty bitty squirrel-hand sized fruit! Mine planted itself by the birdbath, or rather the birds planted it by the birdbath.

Fruit is edible but not tasty to humans. Host to several butterfly species including, most commonly the Gulf Fritillary and Zebra Longwing. Grows in full sun to part shade and drought tolerant.

ID can be difficult due to leaf shape variations.



Corkystem passionflower in bloom. Photo by Emily Bell



Photo by Tabatha S.



Copyright by: Erin Backus



Corkystem passionflower ripened fruit. Photo by Emily Bell



© Ginny Stibolt

What a beautiful wildflower!

Unfortunately, I don't have a lot of personal experience with this native wildflower as it has not volunteered in my yard yet.

I did get to see it growing naturally near the bat houses at UF during the FNPS conference!



Florida Betony - *Stachys floridana*

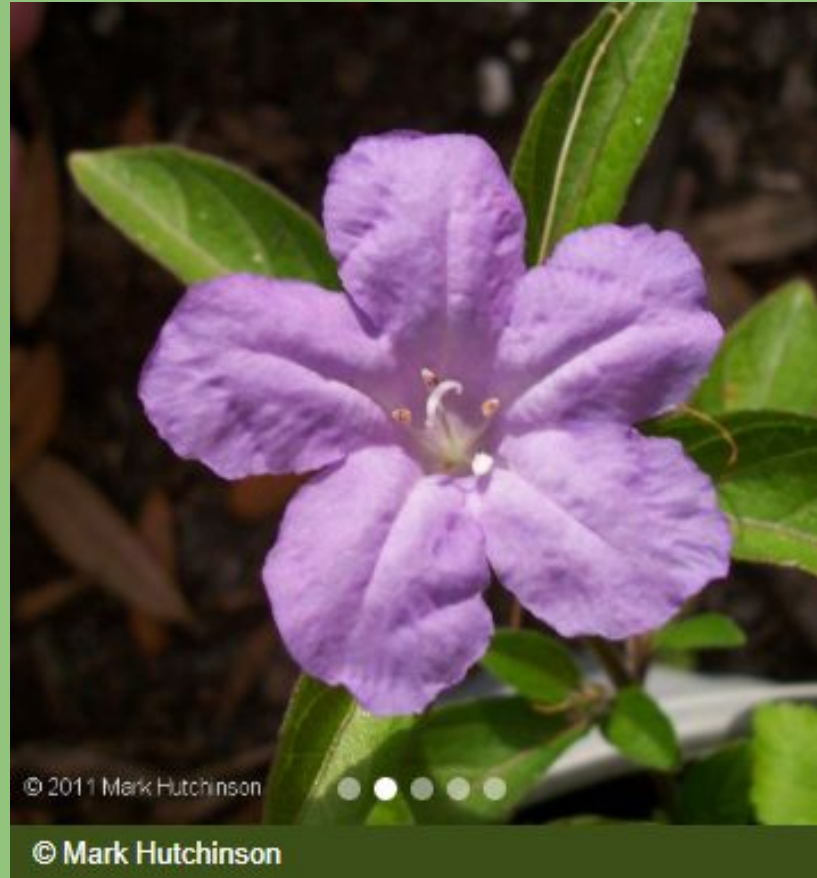
The tubers are edible raw in the spring. I've heard they taste like mild, sweet radish, very crisp.

Likes some moisture, grows in full sun, part sun and shade will tolerate mowing. Can be aggressive.



Pretty in ... lavender!

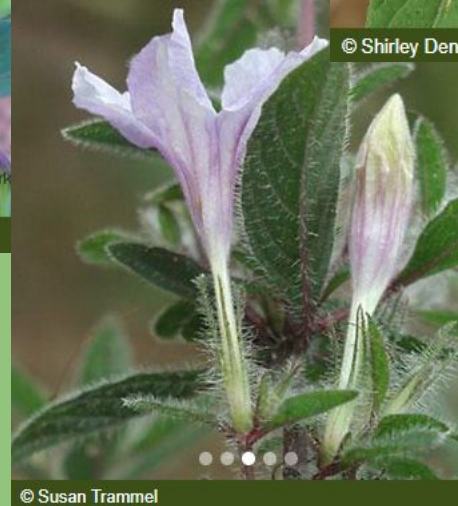
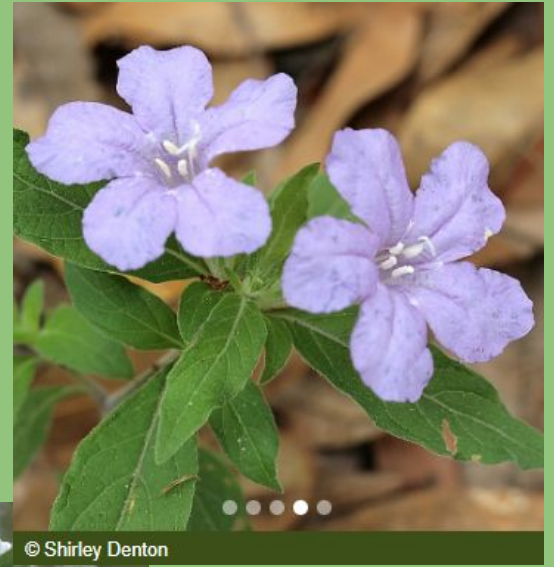
**The native version
of a popular,
invasive common
landscaping plant.**



Wild Petunia - *Ruellia caroliniensis*

Low growing,
dormant in winter,
blooms early spring
though late summer
and drought tolerant.

Why buy an invasive
Mexican petunia from
a big box store when
you can just keep the
free native one that
volunteers to grow in
your yard?



This one only comes out at night!

Blooms in the evening
(hint) and is gone by late
morning.

If you are patient you can
watch it bloom.



Cutleaf Evening-primrose - *Oenothera laciniata*

I love to watch these bloom on my evening walks.

In the morning they start to fade and turn orange with the sunrise.

Full sun, part shade and loves dry conditions.

Great for moths!



Honorable mentions:

Rustweed



Copyright by: James Johnson, 2014
In habitat, Miramar Pineland Natural Area,
Broward County, Florida



Copyright by: Shirley Denton

Horseweed



Photo by Tabatha S.

Fleabane



Photo by Darla Ostenson

Resources:

<https://www.flawildflowers.org/flower-friday-tradescantia-ohiensis/> - Spiderwort

<https://www.fnps.org/plant/tradescantia-ohiensis> - Spiderwort

<https://www.fnps.org/plant/phyla-nodiflora> - Frogfruit

(c) Bill Bouton, some rights reserved (CC BY-SA) - https://www.inaturalist.org/guide_taxa/278751 - White peacock butterfly

<https://florida.plantatlas.usf.edu/plant/species/3906#plant-photos> - Marsh/Manyflower pennywort

<https://www.regionalconservation.org/beta/nfyn/plantdetail.asp?tx=Phytamer> - Pokeweed

<https://www.flawildflowers.org/flower-friday-dichondra-carolinensis/> - Carolina Ponyfoot

<https://regionalconservation.org/beta/nfyn/plantdetail.asp?tx=Dichcaro> - Carolina Ponyfoot

<https://florida.plantatlas.usf.edu/plant/species/2129> - Virginia Pepperweed

<https://www.fnps.org/plant/oxalis-corniculata> - Common Woodsorrell

<https://www.regionalconservation.org/beta/nfyn/plantdetail.asp?tx=Oxalcorn> - Common Woodsorrell

<https://www.flawildflowers.org/flower-friday-oxalis-corniculata/> - Common Woodsorrell

Resources (cont):

<https://www.flawildflowers.org/flower-friday-sesuvium-portulacastrum/> - Sea Purslane

<https://www.fnps.org/plant/sesuvium-portulacastrum> - Sea Purslane

<https://www.regionalconservation.org/beta/nfyn/plantdetail.asp?tx=Passsube> - Corkystem Passion-flower

<https://www.flawildflowers.org/flower-friday-passiflora-suberosa/> - Corkystem Passion-flower

<https://www.fnps.org/plant/passiflora-suberosa> - Corkystem Passion-flower

<https://www.fnps.org/plant/stachys-floridana> - Florida Betony

<https://www.flawildflowers.org/flower-friday-stachys-floridana/> - Florida Betony

https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=stfl4 - Florida Betony

<https://www.fnps.org/plant/ruellia-caroliniensis> - Wild Petunia

<https://www.fnps.org/plant/oenothera-laciniata> - Evening Primrose

<https://regionalconservation.org/ircs/Database/plants/PlantPageFK.asp?TXCODE=Polyproc> - Rustweed

Presentation created by Tabatha S. 2024-25 Volunteer Chair of the Pinellas chapter - FNPS. For use by the Florida Native Plant Society and any of its current members and/or chapters. Thank you to all that helped with its creation!