

# Florida Wildflowers in Their Natural Communities

Review by Sid Taylor

Dr. Walter Kingsley Taylor, author of *The Field Guide to Florida Wildflowers*, has written a new book to aid us in plant identification. *Florida Wildflowers in Their Natural Communities* will be a classic text for years to come. It is organized by habitat types: pine flatwoods, sandhills and clayhills, scrubs, temperate hardwoods forests, coastal uplands, rockland pinelands, rockland hardwood hammocks, and ruderal (disturbed) sites.

The book features 450 species, with two plants per page including photo and text. He uses the least observed specimen for his visual images, then describes in the comment section the other, more familiar species of the genus, with handy identification techniques provided. Everyone will find ease in the use of the index — botanical and common names are listed in a singular compilation. The range sections in the species layouts are very specific by county.


Of particular interest to me are the historical details of the species names derived from the names of the botanists and other historical figures here in Florida during initial exploration. Our state wildflower, *Coreopsis leavenworthii*, was named after a Yale graduate and army surgeon who served at Ft. King during the Second Seminole war in 1838. "Coreopsis" means bedbug, from the seed shape. This is all new information to me and wonderful to share with others.

Also included in the comment section are endemic information, uses for food and healing by Florida's indigenous peoples, sometimes the color the plant becomes when dried, which helps with correct identification, and the latest molecular work to determine family associations and placements by other authors. As an example, Beautyberry, *Callicarpa americana*, has been classified as a verbena traditionally, and is now considered to be a mint.

If I had to pick a favorite flower for myself, I have always had a special affinity for yellow-star grass, *Hypoxis juncea*. I like to call it "our daffodil" due to the lovely color and

early spring appearance it makes. It has been classified as an amaryllis. Now I need to adjust my story as it has been pulled out and its own family created (to honor it): HYPOXIDACEAE.

I haven't lived any further north in the state than here in Citrus county. I am enjoying the many Panhandle-specific species that are featured with photographs and their descriptions. When I manage to plan travel time to go in search of some of "these beauties" (as Dr. Taylor would say), there is a comprehensive "Places to Visit" appendix in the back. It is arranged first by habitat, then by county, and then lists the specific place and the geographical determinations. I found two Citrus County plants in the text that I have not experienced first-hand yet: white colic-root, *Aletris obovata*, and scrub buckwheat, *Erigonum longifolium*.

I don't want to give too much away — buy the book. 

Published in 1998 by the University Press of Florida, 15 Northwest 15th Street, Gainesville, FL 32611. Softback, \$24.95. Also available through FNPS Subtropical Trader (call 727-856-8202 for ordering information) or your local/online bookstore.

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