

Suggested Rain Garden Plants For Citrus County

This list can serve as a guide for selecting native plants for your rain garden.

Quick tips:

- ◆ Avoid wetland plants. Rain gardens go through wet and dry seasons. You need plants accustomed to dry-medium soils, and that will tolerate periodic wet soils.
- ◆ Plant a foundation of foliage plants, that is accented with seasonal flowers.
- ◆ Look at what is flowering on the roadside. These species are good candidates.
- ◆ Always water to establish new plants.
- ◆ Consider ornamental features to make your rain garden look intentional. Bird baths, gazing balls, seating, and so on.

Fakahatchee Grass - *Tripsacum dactyloides*

*Large bunch grass, 4' wide by 6' tall
a dwarf version is available*

Full sun - part sun

Medium moisture, can tolerate dry

Salt Tolerance: Highly salt tolerant

Wildlife:

*Larval host for Three-spotted Skipper (*Cybaeus tripunctus*), Clouded Skipper (*Lerema accius*) and Byssus Skipper (*Problema byssus*) Even when trimmed occasionally, Fakahatchee Grass will return to the tent-like bunch which is excellent cover for small mammals, birds, and reptiles. Deer eat the hard, yellow, corn-like seed produced by this grass. Blooms summer.*

Native Habitats: Wet bogs, roadsides, ditches, wet hammocks, river banks, low thickets, pine woods, open swamps, open habitats, flatwoods, sandhill, scrub. Also cultivated.



Muhly Grass - *Muhlenbergia capillaris*

Medium bunch grass, 3' by 3'

Full sun - part sun

Dry

Salt Tolerance: Moderately salt tolerant

Wildlife: Muhly grass forms a canopy that small animals can use for shelter and refuge. Small birds eat the seeds. Blooms late summer

Native Habitats: Flatwoods, marshes, scrub.



Lopsided Indiangrass - Sorghastrum secundum

Small bunch grass, 1-2' wide by 1-6' tall

Full sun

Dry-moist

Salt Tolerance: Moderately salt tolerant



Wildlife: Swarthy Skipper (Nastra lherminier), Delaware Skipper (Anatrytone arogos), Eufala Skipper (Lerodea eufala) and Twin Spot Skipper (Oligoria maculate). Blooms late summer.

Native Habitats: Flatwoods, secondary pinelands, sandhill.



Whitetop sedge, Starrush - Rhynchospora colorata

Spreading sedge, upto 2' high

Full sun - part sun

Medium moisture, not for very dry sites.

Salt Tolerance: Not salt tolerant

Wildlife: Most Rhynchospora species are wind pollinated. The white bracts of this species attract insects. Blooms in summer.

Native Habitats: Wet flatwoods, wet prairie.



Southern shield fern - Thelypteris kunthii

2'-3' fern, nice contrasting foliage

Part sun - shade

*Medium moisture, tolerates dry
with some shade*

Salt Tolerance: Not salt tolerant

*Foliage turns bronze in winter
as it goes dormant.*

Native Habitats: Forests



American beautyberry - *Callicarpa americana*

Shrub 4' wide by 4-10' tall

Full sun - part sun

Dry

Salt Tolerance: Not salt tolerant

There is a white-fruited/white-flowered variety, uncommonly found naturally in Florida

Wildlife: Attracts various pollinators. Many bird species consume the showy fruit. Blooms spring, fruits present summer-winter.

Native Habitats: scrubby flatwoods, flatwoods, disturbed dry-moist woods.

Ethnobotany: Sometimes used to make jelly which is noted for its color.

There are three chemicals in the leaves that may be as effective as DEET as an insect repellent. Callicarpenal and other compounds isolated from the plant also repel fire ants and ticks.



Saw palmetto - *Serenoa repens*

Shrub, 6' by 6', very happy plants can grow larger

Full sun - part sun

Dry

Salt Tolerance: Moderately salt tolerant



Wildlife: Palmetto berries are important bear food.

Used by monk skipper and palmetto skipper.

More than 100 bird species, 27 mammals, 25 amphibians, 61 reptiles, and countless insects use it as food and/or cover
(Maehr and Layne 1996).

As Maehr and Layne summarize, " If saw palmetto is not the plant species most highly used by Florida wildlife, it certainly is in close contention for that honor."

Native Habitats: Mesic flatwoods, wet flatwoods, dry flatwoods, scrubby flatwoods, scrub, hardwood hammock. Generally absent from cleared sites even after abandonment.

Saltbush, Groundsel - *Baccharis halimifolia*

Shrub, 3-7' wide by 7' tall

Full sun - part sun

Medium moisture, tolerates dry with less sun

Salt Tolerance: Moderately salt tolerant

The primary horticultural feature is the silvery, plume-like achenes which appear in the fall on female plants. The fruits can provide a white haze for several weeks in the fall.

Wildlife: Attracts various pollinators. Flowering during the Monarch migration and a valuable nectar source for them. Seeds are eaten by small birds and other wildlife.

Native Habitats: Coastal uplands and disturbed moist inland area.



Flatwoods plum - *Prunus umbellata*

Shrubby tree, 15' by 15'

Full sun - part sun

Medium - dry moisture

Salt Tolerance: Not salt tolerant

Wildlife: Pollinated by bees. People, birds and mammals eat the fruit. Blooms very early Spring.

Native Habitats: Hammocks, pine woods, mixed woods.



Wax Myrtle - Morella cerifera

Shrubby tree, 10' wide by 15' tall

Full sun - part sun

Medium - dry

Salt Tolerance: Moderately salt tolerant

Plants are either male or female. Lower limbs can be trimmed up for a more tree-like appearance.

*Wildlife: Good wildlife cover. Seeds eaten by birds. Larval host for banded hairstreak (*Satyrium calanus*) and red-banded hairstreak (*Calycopis cecrops*) butterflies.*

Native Habitats: Wet-dry sites. Upland mixed forest, floodplains, wetland edges, cutthroat seeps, old fields, scrub, fence rows, etc.

Ethnobotany: Interesting smell to the foliage. Candles were sometimes made using the wax that covers the seeds.



Yaupon holly - Ilex vomitoria

*Shrubby tree, 8' wide by 25' high
cultivars available: Shillings dwarf , or weeping*

Full sun - part sun

Dry

Salt Tolerance: Highly salt tolerant

*To get fruits, both a male and a female are required.
'Shillings' is a male and can provide an
inconspicuous source of pollen for larger females.*

*Wildlife: Various bird species eat the fruit and
many use the evergreen foliage for cover. Bees
and other insects pollinate the flowers.*

*Native Habitats: Coastal scrub, coastal dunes,
coastal flatwoods, river swamps, scrub, secondary
woods, pine-oak-hickory woods.*

*Ethnobotany: fruits are toxic to people, but a
pleasant tea from the leaves can be made.*



Sparkleberry - *Vaccinium arboreum*

Shrubby tree, 15' wide by 20' high, slow growing

Part sun - full sun

Dry - medium moisture

Salt Tolerance: Not salt tolerant



*Wildlife: Attracts many pollinators, especially valuable to native bees. Fruit is consumed by birds and wildlife. Edible for humans, but texture is mealy. Larval host for striped hairstreak (*Satyrium liparops*).*

Native Habitats: Dry sites. Xeric hammock, dry to mesic hardwoods, may be in upper edges of floodplains, overgrown flatwoods, coastal dunes, sandhill, scrubby sandhill.



Winged sumac - *Rhus copallinum*

Small shrub to shrubby tree (15')

Full sun - part sun

Dry

Salt Tolerance: Not salt tolerant

Wildlife: Flowers attract pollinators. Fruits are eaten by birds including warblers, jays, and crows.

Native Habitats: Flatwoods, dry prairie, sandhill, disturbed areas including dry muck.

Ethnobotany: Fruits are tart and used by humans as a drink flavoring.



Goldenrods - suggested: *Solidago odora*

Wildflower, 3-5' high

Full sun

Medium moisture

Salt Tolerance: Highly salt tolerant

Noted for: Showy flowers, aroma, fragrance. There are many other species of goldenrod worth investigating for rain gardens.



Wildlife: Attracts many pollinators. Fall blooming

Native Habitats: Sandhill, dunes, pine-oak-hickory woods, secondary woods.

Ethnobotany:

The crushed leaves of sweet goldenrod give off a licorice scent that readily identifies this widespread species. A tea can be brewed from its leaves. (Niering)

Softhair coneflower - *Rudbeckia mollis*

Wildflower, 3'-4'

Full sun - part sun

Dryish

Salt Tolerance: Moderately salt tolerant

Basal rosette with tall flower stems that flop without support. Blooms late spring-fall. Prolific self-seeder. Related to the smaller Black-eyed Susan, which may also be suited to rain garden planting, but needs more moisture in general.



Wildlife: Used by Halictid bees and some butterflies. Host plant for the caterpillars of silvery checkerspot and gorgone checkerspot butterflies. Seeds eaten by small birds.

Native Habitats: Mostly ruderal, sandhills, open hammocks.



Dotted horsemint - *Monarda punctata*

Wildflower, 2'-5' high

Full sun

Dryish

Salt Tolerance: Moderately salt tolerant



Wildlife: Attracts many bees and butterflies.

Native Habitats: Dry disturbed areas, old fields, and upper sand dunes.

Ethnobotany: Contains thymol, the same oil as thyme and oregano. It can be used as an American-grown substitute for those Mediterranean herbs, so plant in an herb garden or cottage garden.

Silkgrass - *Pityopsis graminifolia*

Wildflower, 2'-3' high

Full sun

Dry

Salt Tolerance: Not salt tolerant

Foliage can be attractive year-round as silvery-gray green. The foliage will spread into a small mat which can be used to some extent as a groundcover. Cut back after flowering to keep it neat.



Wildlife: Attracts pollinators.

Native Habitats: Sandhill, scrub, scrubby flatwoods, flatwoods, dry prairie, disturbed areas.



Wild white indigo - *Baptisia alba*

Wildflower, 2'-5' high by 2'-4' wide

Full sun - part sun

Dry

Salt Tolerance: Not salt tolerant

Very showy flowers in spring.



*Wildlife: Larval host for wild indigo duskywing (*Erynnis baptisiae*) and Zarucco duskywing (*Erynnis zarucco*) butterflies. Deer and rabbits browse the foliage, and as a legume it provides nutritious, protein-rich food (toxic to humans and livestock). The plant is adapted to withstand browsing because of its large tuberous roots.*

Native Habitats: Sandhill

Tickseed, Lanceleaf - Coreopsis lanceolata

Wildflower, 6"-2.5'

Full sun - part sun

Medium - dry

Salt Tolerance: Not salt tolerant

Basal rosette until flowering.

In central Florida, lanceleaf has a relatively short blooming period (spring-mid-summer) compared to the equally suitable Leavenworth's tickseed (spring-fall). However, Leavenworth's is an annual. Coreopsis is the state wildflower.



Wildlife: Attracts many species of butterfly as well as other pollinators. Birds and other small wildlife consume seed.

Native Habitats: Sandhills, edges of cypress swamps and marshes, ruderal areas.

Manyflowered beardtongue - Penstemon multiflorus

Wildflower, 1.5' - 2.5' tall

Full sun - part sun

Dryish

Salt Tolerance: Not salt tolerant

Basal rosette produces tall stems with numerous white flowers, spring-summer.



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Shirley Denton, August 2001

*Wildlife: Popular with bees and pollinators. Occasionally used by hummingbirds. Larval host to Baltimore checkerspot (*Euphydryas phaeton*)*

Native Habitats: Dry flatwoods, sandhill, ruderal areas. Well-drained upland habitats

Rayless sunflower - Helianthus radula

Wildflower, 3" - 2' tall

Full Sun

Medium - dry

Salt Tolerance: Not salt tolerant

*Basal rosette followed by flower stems summer-fall.
Flowers are brown and not showy.*



Wildlife: Very popular with pollinators.

Native Habitats: Flatwoods. Moist to dry roadsides.

Blue-eyed grass - Sisyrinchium angustifolium

Wildflower, 6"-1' high

Full sun

Medium moisture

Salt Tolerance: Not salt tolerant

Not a grass, but in the iris family. Foliage is low and neat even during periods when there are no flowers (flowers in mid-spring). Many non-native cultivars are available.

Wildlife: pollinator plant

Native Habitats: Cutthroat seeps, moist roadsides, hammocks, bogs, river banks.



Twinflower - *Dyschoriste oblongifolia*

Wildflower, 6"-1'

Full sun - part sun

*Dryish, won't tolerate extended
extremely dry periods*

Salt Tolerance: Not salt tolerant

Small but showy flowers bloom spring-fall.



Wildlife: Attracts many pollinators, especially bees. Larval host plant for common buckeye (Junonia coenia) butterflies.

Native Habitats: Sandhill, flatwoods, upland mixed forest.

Common blue violet - *Viola sororia*

Wildflower, 6" high

Part sun - shade

Medium - dry

Salt Tolerance: Not salt tolerant

Low-growing rosette of leaves and flowers, flowers primarily during cool spring weather, and sometimes fall. Flowers range from blue to white.



Wildlife: butterflies. Leaves are edible for herbivores.

Native Habitats: Dry to mesic upland hardwood forests, bluff microsites, upper fringes of wiregrass seep slopes.

Ethnobotany: The leaves and flowers of violets are edible for humans.

Rainlily - *Zephyranthes atamasca* or *Zephyranthes simpsonii*

Wildflower, 1' tall

Full sun to shade

Medium moisture

Salt Tolerance: Not salt tolerant

Typically seen in spring or after rain. Grows in small tufts. Inconspicuous when not in bloom. Individual plants are short-lived perennials, but clumps persist for many years.

Wildlife: Attracts pollinators.

Native Habitats: River floodplains. Low roadsides. Low pastures. Usually seen in late winter/spring after rains. Can show up at other times with the right pattern of dry/rain.

There are two species in Florida with somewhat different but overlapping distributions. Culture and uses in the landscape are similar. It is best to use local sources.



Frogfruit, Turkey tangle - *Phyla nodiflora*

Wildflower, 6"

Full sun - part sun

Medium - dry

Salt Tolerance: Highly salt tolerant

*Small purple and white flowers, bloom spring-fall.
Low growing groundcover. Can be used as a turf
substitute in low traffic areas.*

*Wildlife: Larval host for Phaon Crescent (*Phyciodes phaon*),
White Peacock (*Anartia jatrophae*) and Common Buckeye
(*Junonia coenia*). Good nectar source for hairstreaks.*

*Native Habitats: Dry-moist-wet sites. Disturbed wet prairies,
ruderal areas.*



Shirley Denton, March 2000



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