

Feay's palafoxia

(*Palafoxia feayi*)

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

Feay's palafox (Palafoxia feayi) is a very unique wildflower, endemic only to Florida's central and southern peninsula. It occurs naturally in sandhills, scrubby flatwoods, and scrub. It's fall blooms are an important food source for a variety of butterflies and bees. Research from the Archbold Biological Station documented numerous bee and wasp species visiting the flowers including bumble bees, sweat bees, leafcutting bees, spider wasps, vespid wasps and more.



Photo by Lilly Anderson-Messec

Although it is a member of the Aster family, it bears few visual similarities. It is more woody than herbaceous; its blooms are without the petal-like ray florets; and its disk florets are tubular. They are white to pinkish in color. Most noticeable are the dark purple- to maroon-colored stigmas and the curved, white styles that extend from the ends of each disk floret. At the base of each flower are bracts that vary in color from green to purple. Leaves are oppositely arranged, oval-shaped toward the base, and get smaller and more linear toward the top of the plant. The leaf surface is rough to the touch.

Family: Asteraceae (Aster, daisy or composite family)

Native range: Central and South Florida

To see where natural populations of Feay's palafox have been vouchered, visit www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.

Hardiness: Zones 9A–11

Lifespan: Perennial

Soil: Well-drained, sandy soils

Exposure: Full sun to minimal shade

Growth habit: 4–6'+

Garden tips: Feay's palafox is not suited for the small garden. Its tendency to grow tall and lanky makes it best suited for larger plantings with other tall-growing genera such as Silphium, Liatris, and Andropogon. It is easily propagated from seed, although seed is not readily available.

Plants are sometimes available from nurseries that specialize in Florida native plants. Visit www.PlantRealFlorida.org to find a nursery in your area.