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6–10 in
Host, nectar



Photo by Mary Keim

Oblongleaf twinflower

If you are looking for an easy, low-maintenance groundcover, consider Oblongleaf twinflower (*Dyschoriste oblongifolia*). This perennial wildflower has an extended bloom period and is adaptable to a variety of conditions. It prefers open, sunny areas but can tolerate shade (although flowers won't be as profuse). It typically blooms spring through fall and is commonly found in dry to moist habitats of sandhills, flatwoods and upland mixed forests throughout peninsular Florida and into the central Panhandle. Of the three native *Dyschoriste* species, Oblongleaf twinflower is the largest and most commonly available for purchase.

Other native twinflower species are Pineland twinflower (*D. angusta*) and Swamp twinflower (*D. humistrata*). Both species are rather small compared with *D. oblongifolia*. Swamp twinflower typically blooms in spring. It makes an excellent groundcover and turf replacement in moist to wet soils and does very well in



Photo by Peg Urban

Twinflower makes an excellent groundcover.

shady well-drained soils. It also adapts to seasonally dry conditions. Pineland twinflower is more common in South Florida, where it can bloom year-round.

Both Swamp and Pineland twinflower have smaller flowers than Oblongleaf twinflower. Swamp twinflower's leaves are rounder and have a succulent appearance, while Pineland's leaves are linear.

Twinflower is so-named because its flowers are born in pairs. It is also referred to as snakeherb.

Description

Oblongleaf twinflower grows to between 6 and 10 inches tall and is spreading. Its small 1-inch blooms are light-blue to purple and funnel-shaped, with five lobed petals. The lower petal bears dark marks or streaks that extend into the throat. Each bloom has four stamens and five calyces. Twinflower's simple leaves are linear, dark green, pubescent and oppositely arranged on thin stems.

Butterflies and bees

Twinflower's nectar attracts a few species of butterflies, including the Malachite and White Peacock. It is a host plant for the Common buckeye. Look for small pale-green eggs laid singly on leaves. Common buckeye caterpillars eat both leaves and flowers and may be seen on the plants year-round and especially in fall.

Leafcutter, bumble and honey bees are also attracted to the flower.

Planting

Plants should be installed 18 to 24 inches apart as they spread quickly. To propagate, take stem cuttings or divide clumps in summer.

Twinflower forms dense colonies by underground runners. It is also a prolific self-seeder and, in the best conditions, may require regular weeding of seedlings to keep it under control.

All three native twinflower species are well-suited for life in a hanging basket or pot. Pay attention to soil moisture levels, particularly with Swamp twinflower, as it will quickly begin to perish if it dries out.

Seeds

Seeds are not available commercially at this time.

Plants

Twinflower is often available at nurseries that specialize in native plants.

Care

In winter, plants are semi-dormant and can be trimmed or mown to 3 inches to freshen. Plants will go dormant in areas that receive frost (usually in North Florida) but will quickly recover in spring.

Site conditions

Oblongleaf twinflower prefers full sun and well-drained soils. Planting in partial shade will result in a less dense cover. Swamp twinflower is acclimated to moist soils and partially shady conditions. Pineland twinflower prefers well-drained calcareous or sandy soils. Once established, it is very drought tolerant.

One of the best uses for this plant is as a low groundcover near sidewalks, walkways or naturalized areas. The plant spreads by underground rhizomes and by self-sown seed. It will flower intermittently spring through fall. Twinflower is not salt tolerant, making it a poor candidate for coastal landscapes.

Hardiness zones

Oblongleaf twinflower is suitable for zones 8A–11. Pineland twinflower is best suited for zones 8A–10A, while Swamp twinflower does well in zones 8B–11.



Photo by Bob Peterson

Pineland twinflower