



FYN Garden Q & A Series

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FYN Topic: Native Wildflowers as Low-growing Groundcovers

Question: Which native wildflowers work the best as low-growing groundcovers? Do any do well in both sun and part shade? Do any have a blue flower? Wendy from Alva

Answer: In SWFL, beach sunflower, *Helianthus debilis*, blanket flower, *Gaillardia pulchella* and Pine-land lantana, *Lantana depressa*, produce an 8 to 16 inch high ground cover requiring little water initially to get plants started. All do best in full sun and well-drained, sandy soil. Sunshine Mimosa, *Mimosa stringillosa*, and False Petunia, *Ruellia caroliniana*, stay much shorter, growing 3 to 8 inch high only. Of the five, sunshine mimosa is the most drought tolerant but its leaf canopy has the least tolerance to cold. False Petunia is the shorter of the two but needs more shade to get established compared to the others. It also expands rather slowly but will grow faster with regular irrigation and light fertilization in the spring or fall. Organic fertilizer with micro-nutrients is best. False Petunia has light-blue, almost purple petunia-shaped flowers. It creates a cooling effect when used under a tree canopy. All five groundcovers have their strongest bloom periods in the spring and fall.

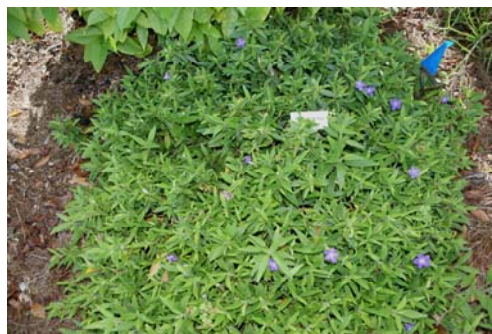
Useful Links

<http://www.floridayards.org>

<http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu>

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/>

<http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu>



False Petunia as ground cover

Thomas Becker is an extension agent for the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods (FYN) program at the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the Horticulture Help Desk at 239-533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. or by emailing Extgardener@leegov.com. Visit his Web page at <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml>

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