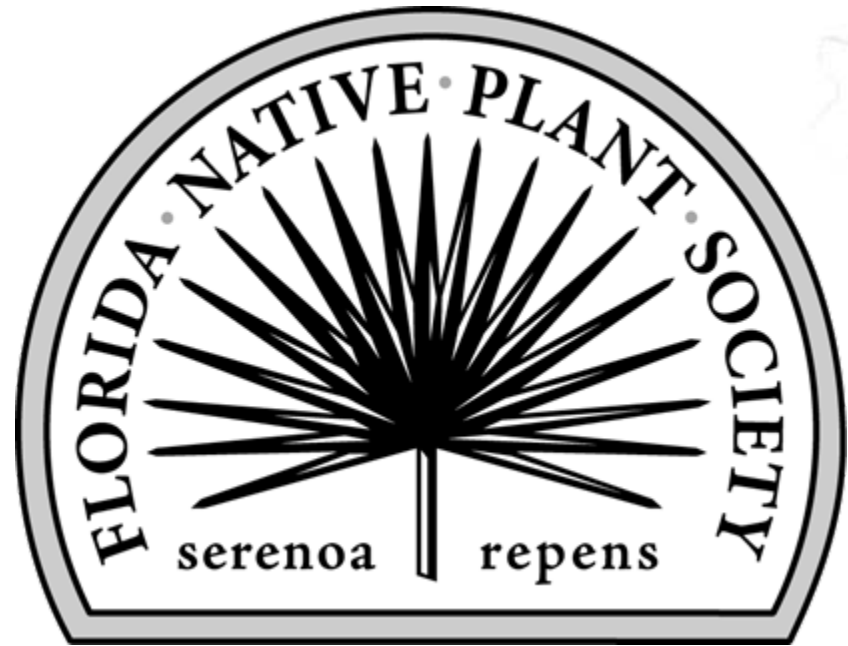


Florida Native Plant Society



Native Plant Owners Manual

Ruellia caroliniensis – Carolina Wild Petunia

Mark Hutchinson

Putting things in perspective

All seasonal references are applicable to the eastern panhandle of Hernando County where the plants portrayed in this presentation grow. This area happens to be a cold spot in central Florida due to the Brooksville Ridge and approximates a Hardiness Zone of 8a or 8b, average annual low temperatures ranging between 10 and 20 °F.

Any reference to medicinal or culinary use of plants or plant parts should in no way be considered an endorsement by the Florida Native Plant Society of any sort of experimentation or consumptive use.

Please do not attempt to rescue any native plants without first reviewing the [FNPS Policy on Transplanting Native Plants](#)

Special thanks to Lucille Lane, Shirley Denton, Kari Ruder and Brooke Martin

Carolina Wild Petunia

Acanthus family





Ruellia caroliniensis



Navigation Links

(for use in open discussion)

[What's in a Name?](#)

[Biological Classification – Tree of Life](#)

Where does this plant grow?

- [In North America](#)
- [In Florida](#)

What this plant needs to -

- [Thrive](#)
- [Pollinate](#)
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‘View/Full Screen Mode’
recommended

Throughout this
presentation, clicking
this symbol will return
you to this page.



Carolina Wild Petunia, wild petunia, Carolina wild petunia, Carolina petunia

Ruellia (roo - El - ee - uh)

Named for Jean Ruel
(1479 – 1537) a French botanist
best known for translating
Dioscorides, Materia medica
from Arabic to Latin. This book,
written in about 65 AD, was the
basis for modern pharmaceutical
and herbal writing.



caroliniensis (kair - oh - lin - ee -EN - sis)

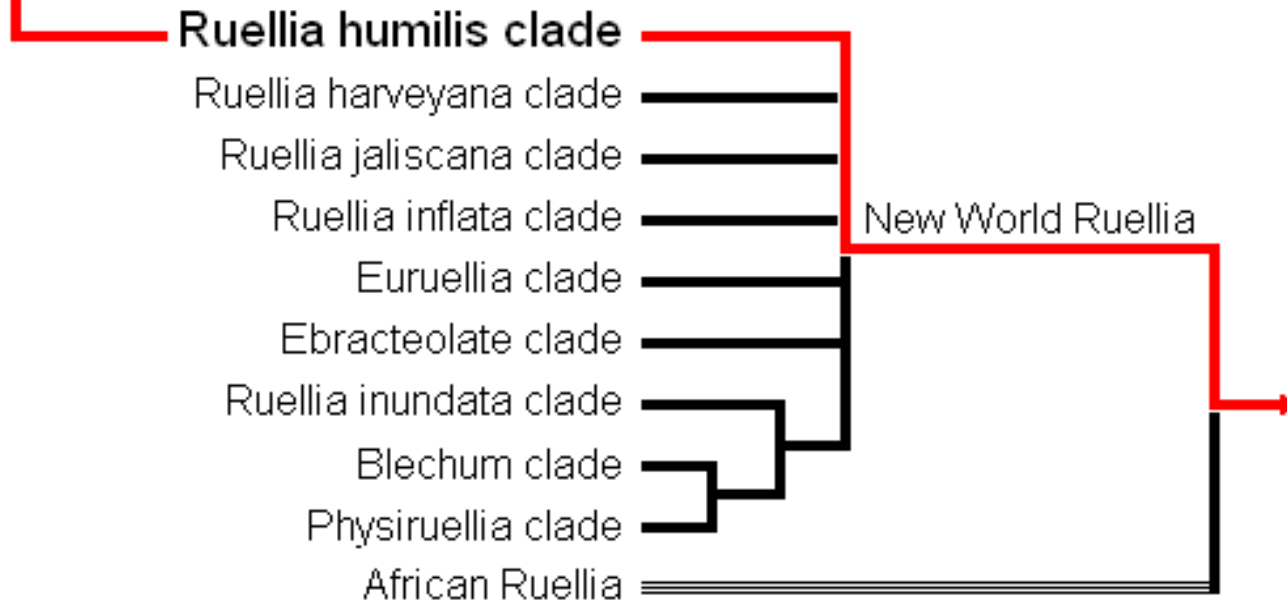
Latin for of, or from Carolina



Biological and Genetic Relationships

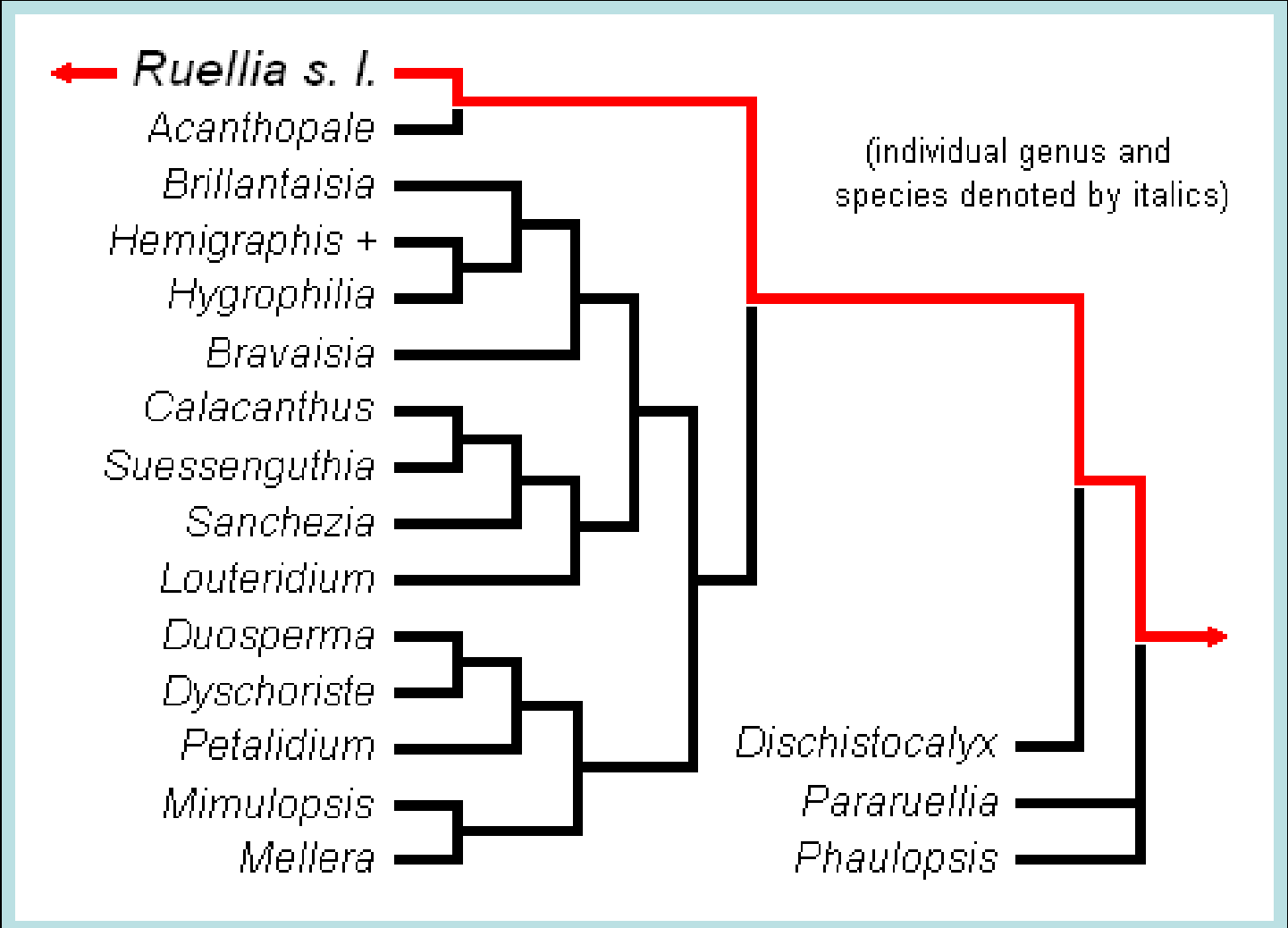
Ruellia caroliniensis

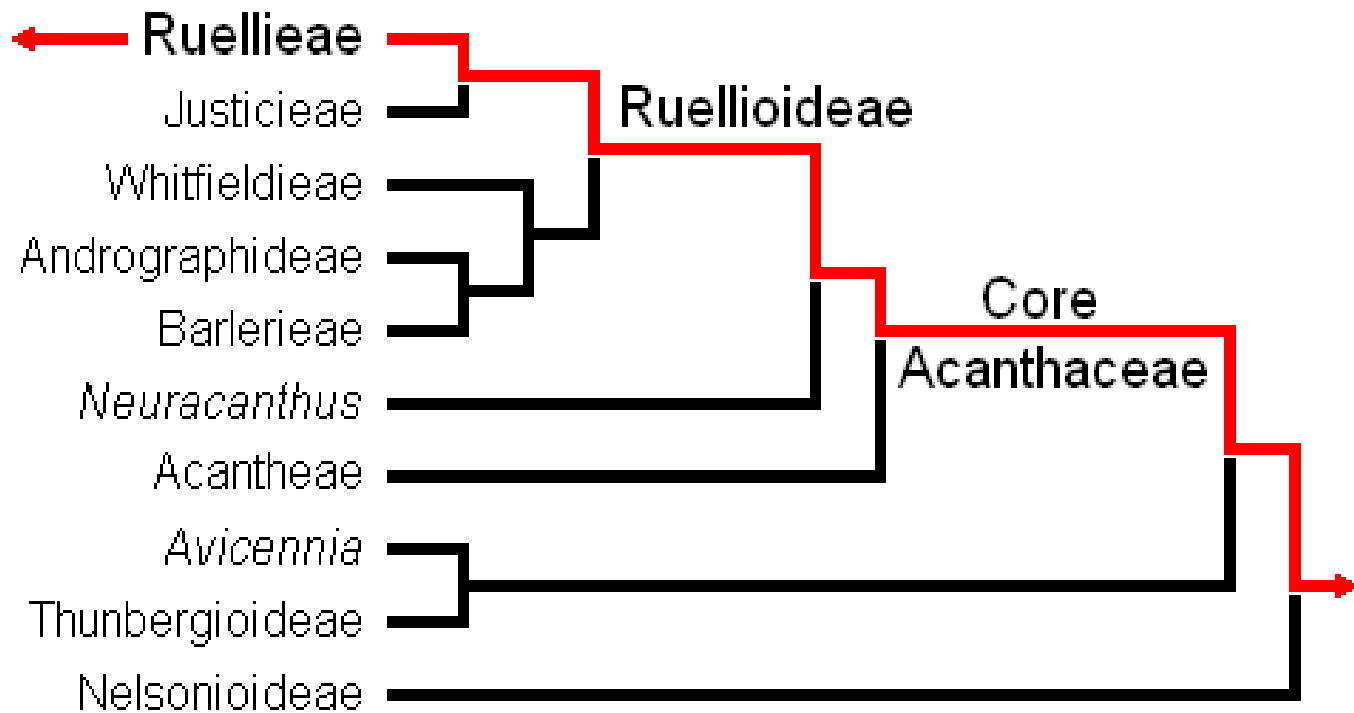
(Walt.) Steud. - Carolina wild petunia



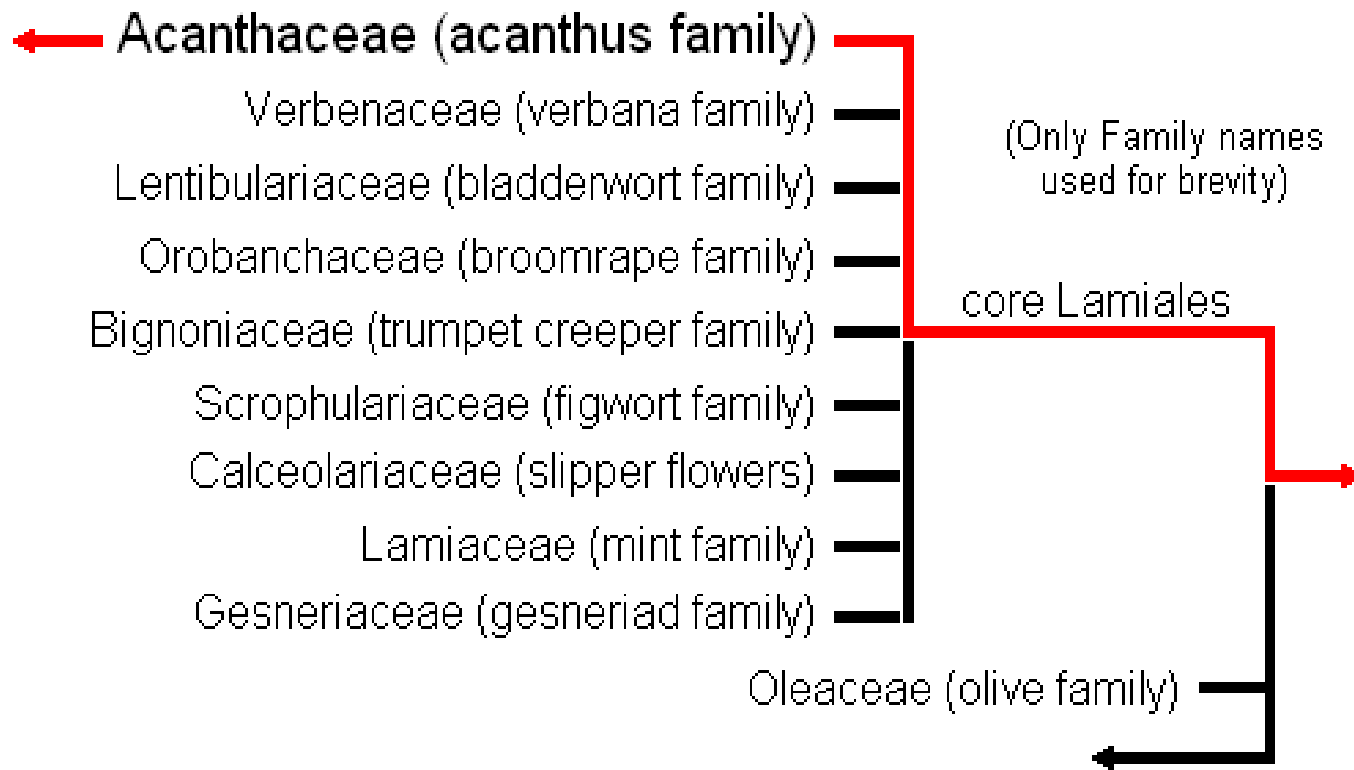
Each species is a leaf on the Tree of Life. Its genetic connections can be explored by following the branches (red line), towards the roots of life.



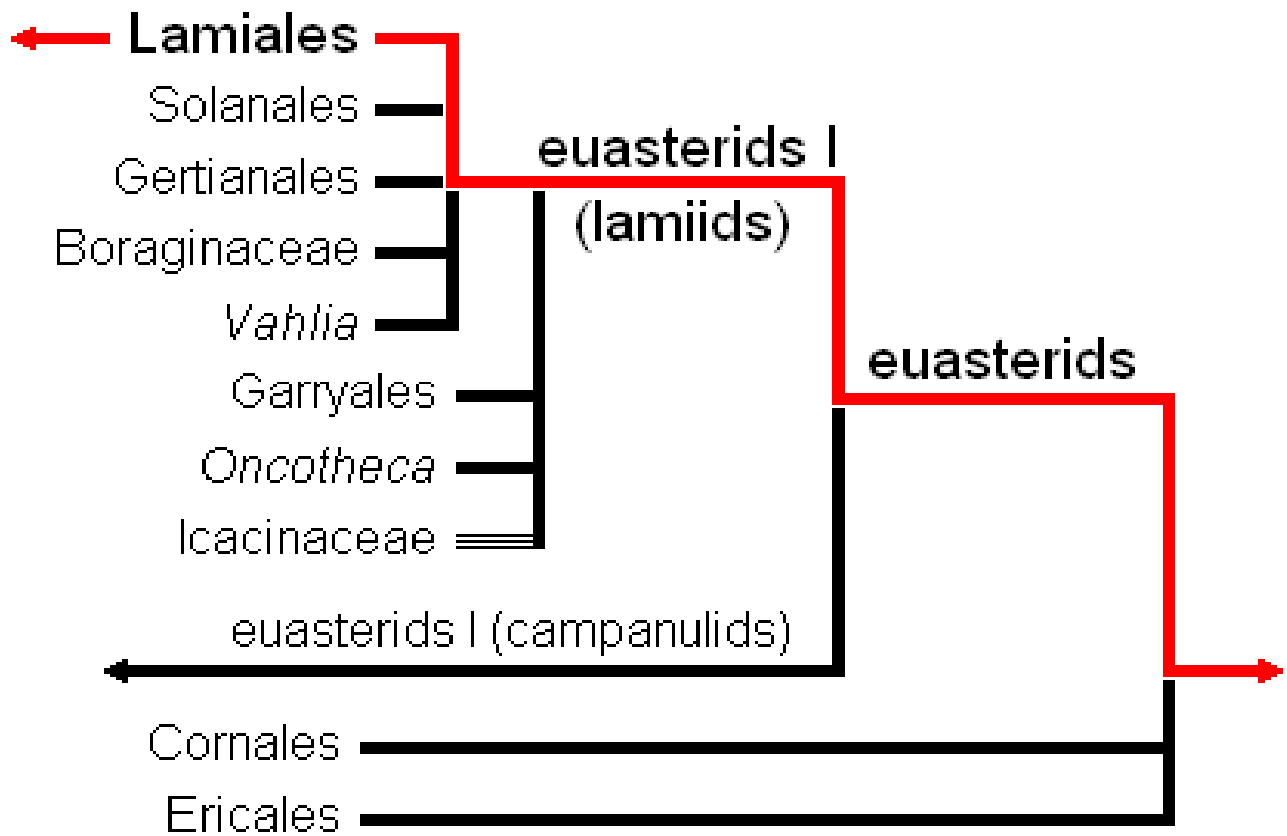




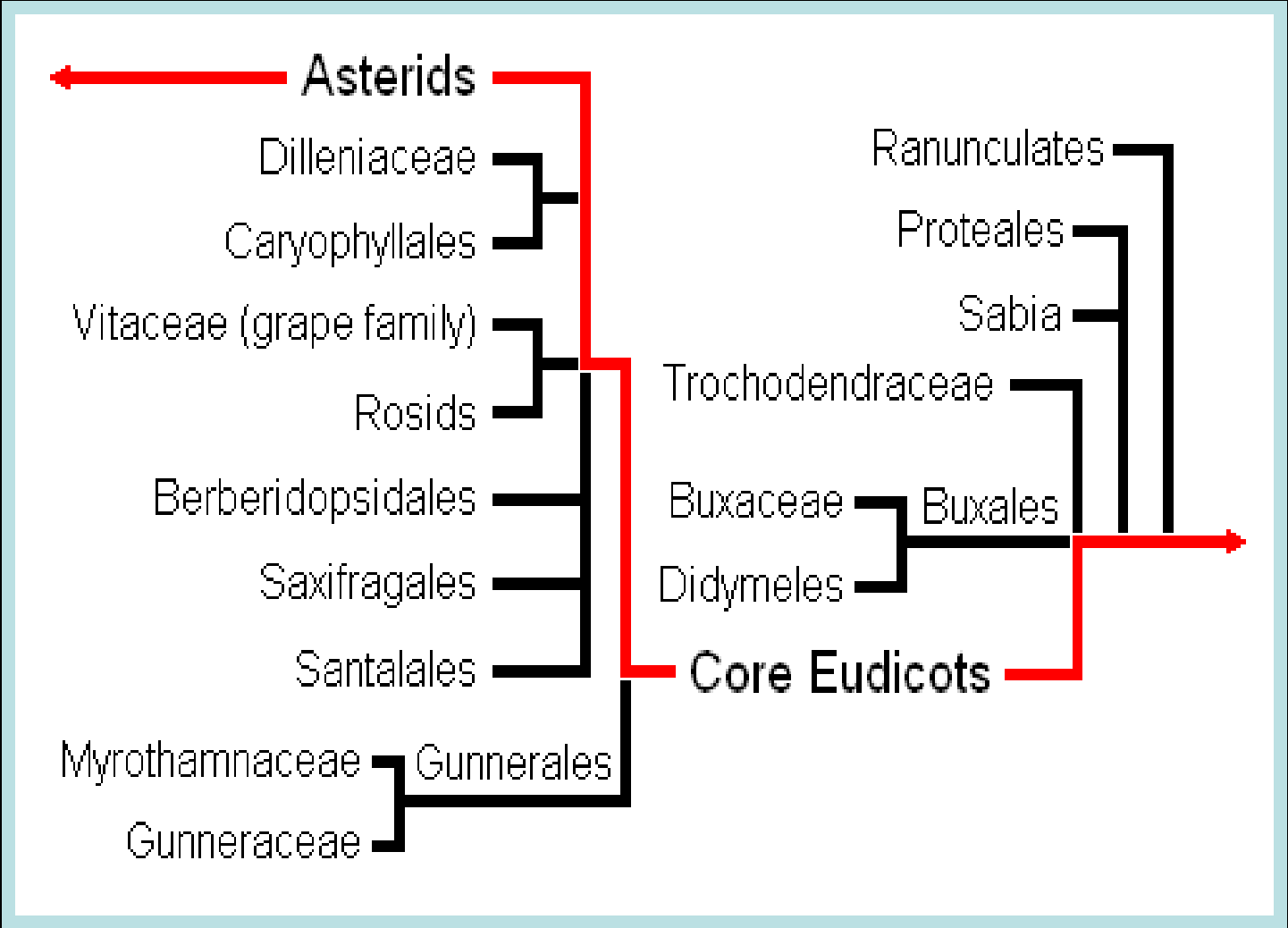
(Individual species and genus denoted by italics)

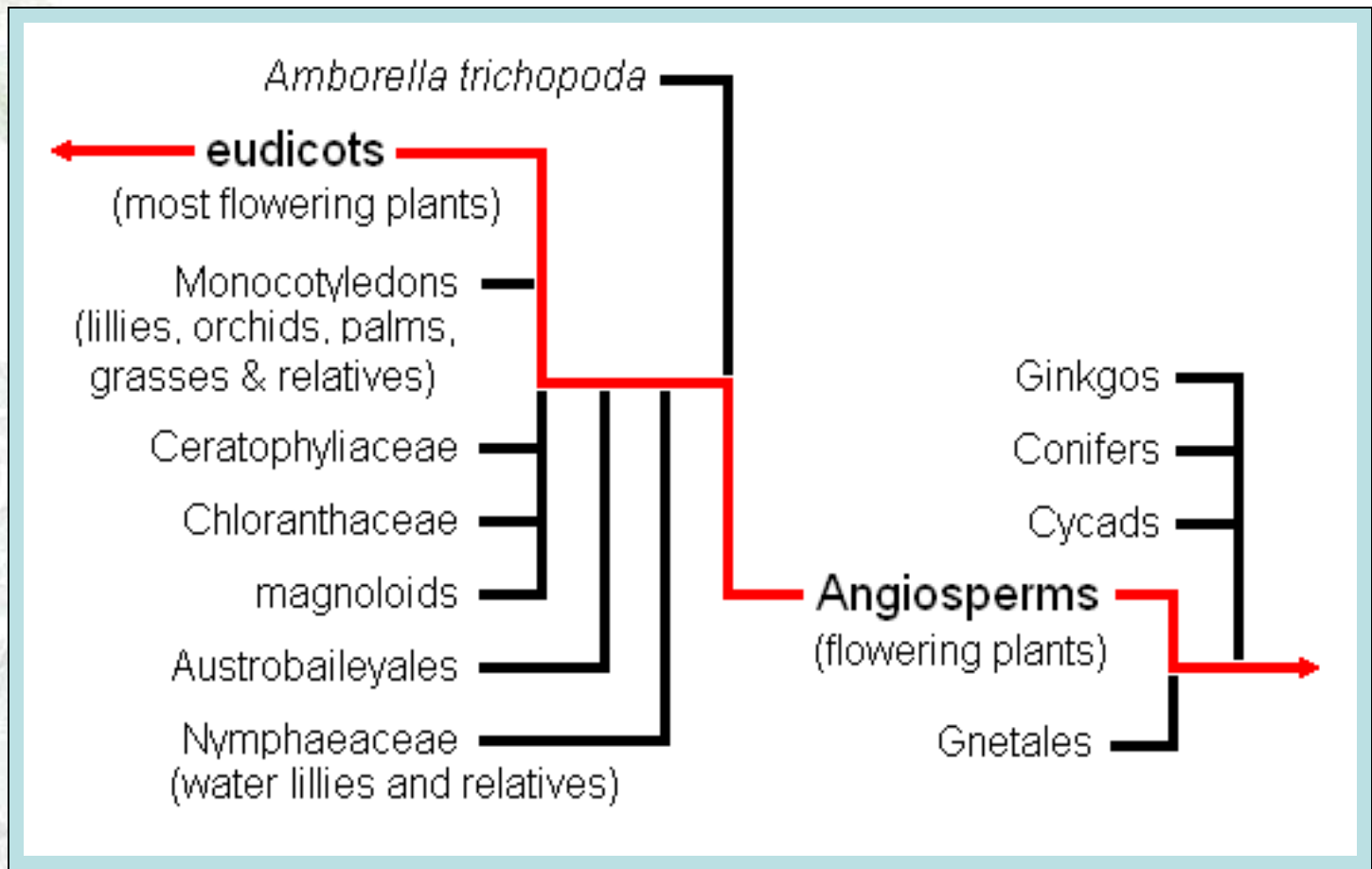


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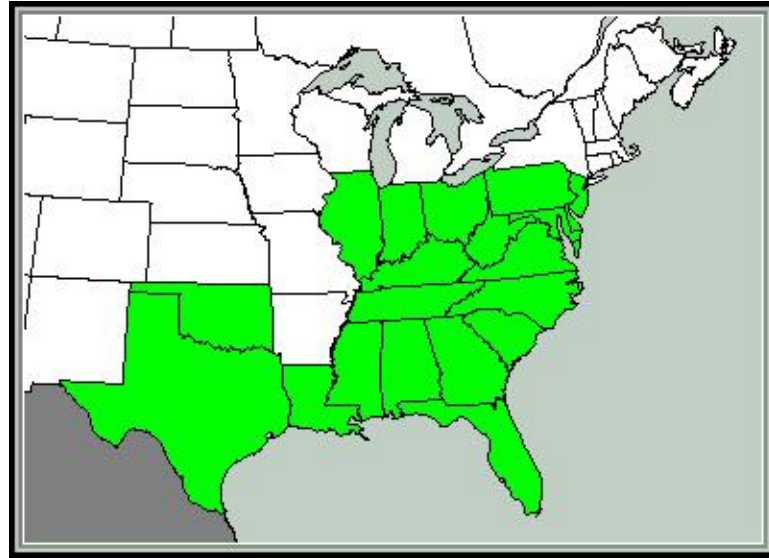


Link to the University of Arizona's [Tree of Life](#).



Species Distribution in the United States

Carolina Wild Petunia, native to North America, is endemic to the southeastern United States. Its growing range extends from eastern Texas and Oklahoma, north as far as southern Illinois, east to as far as New Jersey, then south along the Atlantic seaboard to Florida.



(For specific distribution within any of the shaded areas go to the USDA link provided on the reference page, and click the shaded area of interest.)



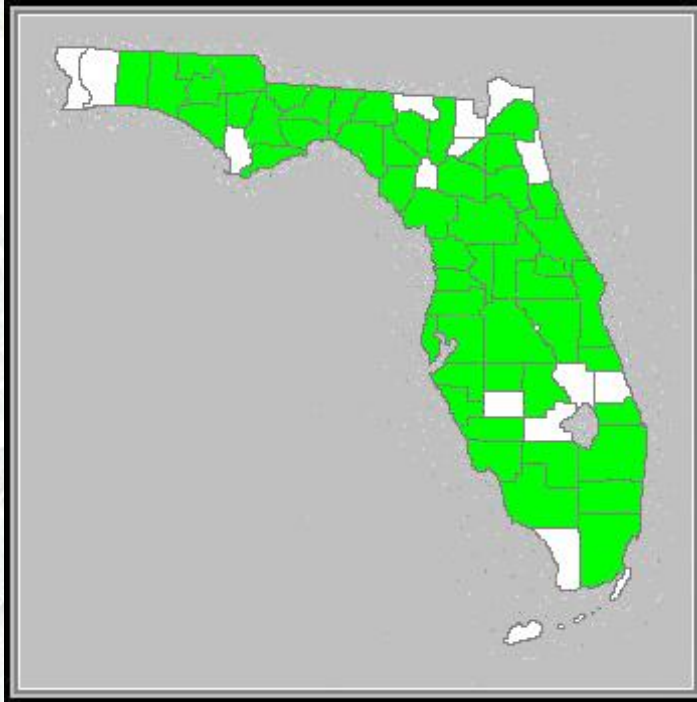


- The USDA, NRCS, lists a total of 26 species of the genus *Ruellia* L. throughout the United States.
- The Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants lists eight species of this genus occurring in Florida, five of which are native.

**Robert K. Godfrey Herbarium
FSU #202414 Bay County,
8/22/1997**



Species Distribution within Florida



(*vouchered – indicates that a fully documented dried specimen has been deposited in an approved herbarium)

- Wild Petunia, a perennial wildflower, is *vouchered in approximately fifty-two counties in Florida, covering most of the Panhandle and peninsula.
- *Ruellia caroliniensis* prefers sandy uplands, flatwoods, hammocks and open woods.



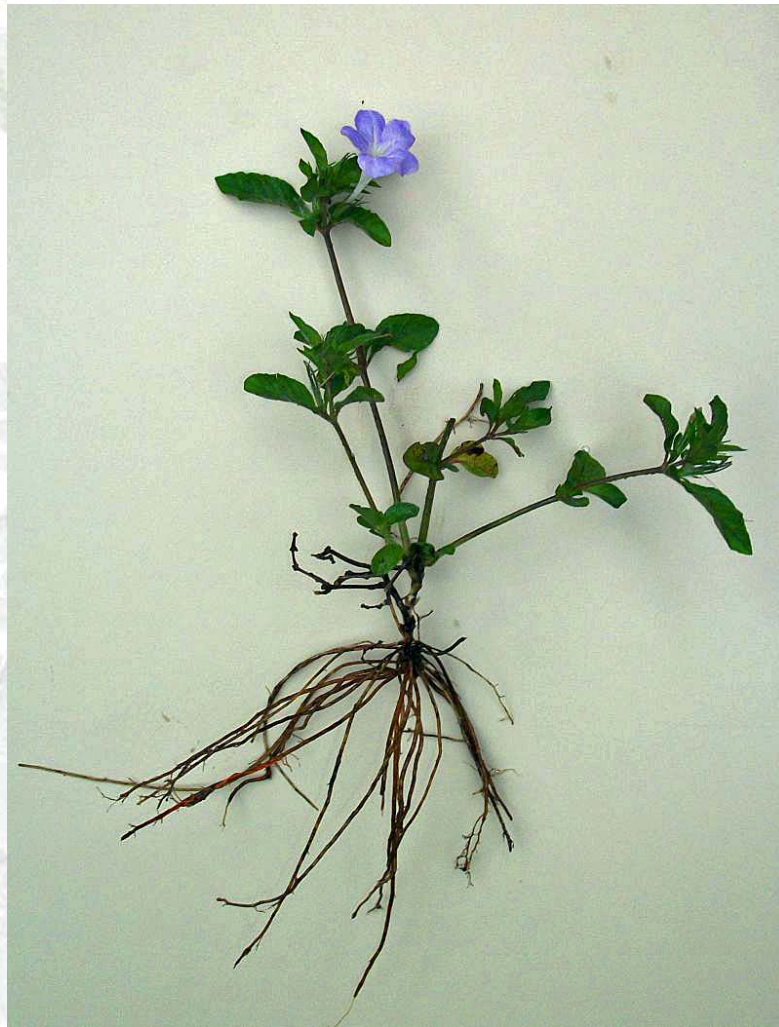
Plant Structure and Life Cycle



Ruellia caroliniensis, a herbaceous perennial wildflower, comes back quickly from winter dieback.

One of the first wildflowers to bloom in the spring, and continue well into Fall. It has a multi-branched stem with simple, opposite, ovate to oval leaves.





Carolina Wild Petunia has a strong woody root system assuring a quick comeback from winter freezes and wildfire.

This tough root also holds up very well during transplantation and rescue efforts. Watch for new plants sprouting in lawn areas.



There are five native species of *Ruellia* in Florida, and sometimes it is hard to tell which species you may have. *Ruellia caroliniensis* can be distinguished by the long-pointed calyx lobes and bracts under the trumpet-shaped flower. These remain in place as the flower wilts and the seed capsule forms.





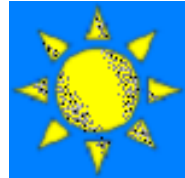
Ruellia caroliniensis flowers from early spring to late summer, the blooms are short lived, usually only lasting a day. If pollination has been successful, a seed capsule will form at the same leaf axil the flower occupied. This pod will turn brown in about two months before splitting open to release about five seeds.



Growing Conditions



to



• *Ruellia caroliniensis* can handle direct sun to fairly deep shade

- Wild Petunia favors sandy well-drained soil
- Alkaline soil - 7.9 to 8.5 pH
- Good drought tolerance, moderate salt tolerance
- Hardiness: USDA Zone 6a: to -23.3 °C (-10 °F)
to USDA Zone 10b: above 1.7 °C (35 °F)
- Flowering and seed production occur from early spring into summer
- Height: 12 - 24 inches (30 - 60 cm.)



Pollinators and Wildlife

Ruellia caroliniensis is a must for any butterfly garden. It is also a source of nectar and pollen for honey bees, native bees, wasp and hummingbirds.

Carolina Wild Petunia is host plant for the larva of the Common Buckeye, *Junonia coenia*, and White Peacock, *Anartia jatrophae* butterflies.



Seed Collection and Propagation

Seed capsules are mature and ready to be collected about two months after the flower withers and the capsule turns brown. These pods will eventually open on their own and self-seed, so it is best to bag the seed pods when they first turn brown. Seeds must be cold stratified to insure germination.

Carolina Wild Petunia can also be propagated by summer cuttings and propagation by division once the plant is a couple of years old.



Presentation References

- Biological and genetic relationships

University of Arizona [Tree of Life](#)

- United States distribution

[USDA](#) - Natural Resource Conservation Service

- Florida distribution

[Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants](#)

- Herbarium specimen

[Robert K. Godfrey Herbarium FSU](#)



Presentation References (cont.)

- Growing conditions & general information

[University of Florida IFAS](#)

[Wildflower Center UTA](#)

- Nectar Food Plants

[Biospherenursery.com](#)

- FNPS – Natives for Landscaping

[FNPS.org](#) This Link will take you to the profile for this plant on the FNPS website

- [Florida Plants](#) by zone and habitat, use your county name or zip-code to see native habitat classifications and appropriate plants.



- For more in-depth study:

Native Florida Plants: Low Maintenance Landscaping and Gardening. Robert G. Haehle and Joan Brookwell. 2004 (revised edition). Taylor Trade Publishing. ISBN 1589790510.

A Gardener's Guide to Florida's Native Plants. Rufino Osorio. 2001. Gainesville: University Press of Florida. ISBN 0813018528.

Grafting, Budding, Cutting, Layering & Other Ways of Propagating Fruit Plants in Florida. 1995. Gainesville: Institute of Food & Agricultural Science. ISBN 0916287092.

