



FLORIDA
WILDFLOWER
FOUNDATION

planting and care of *Silphiums* in landscapes

Photo by Nancy Blissett

About this genus



Photo by Sarah Kleier

Silphium astericus

Florida has two native *Silphium* species, both with robust foliage and flowers. The traditional common name for these plants is Rosinweed, but to eliminate any misconception that these beautiful plants are weeds, we're adopting new common names. Starry Silphium (*Silphium astericus*) occurs in flatwoods, sandhills and disturbed areas in the Panhandle and the western central peninsula south to Lee County. Bigleaf Silphium (*Silphium compositum*) occurs in sandhills in the Panhandle and northern counties south to Pasco County.

Description

Starry Silphium is a perennial that may die back in the winter, particularly if cold. It sports new foliage in the spring and can produce flowers from mid-spring through early fall, and even through winter if temperatures are mild. The flowering stems can reach 3 to 5 feet, with plants about 2 feet across. The lance-shaped, toothed leaves occur throughout the stem to the flowering scapes, where the stems branch to support many flowering heads. The 2-inch flowerheads have yellow ray petals and disks. This species is especially loved, because it blooms over a long period of time.

Bigleaf Silphium is also a perennial, but does die back in the winter. It emerges in spring with very unique basal leaves — they are almost round, deeply dissected, dark green, red-veined and 4 to 12 inches across. The flowering stems can

reach 6 feet and have a few tiny leaves scattered up the stem, which branches near the top. Flowers are slightly smaller than Starry Silphium, with yellow ray petals surrounding reddish disks, and bloom toward the end of summer. Because the stems are not leafy and have flowers only at the top, place plants where the beautiful basal foliage can also be appreciated.

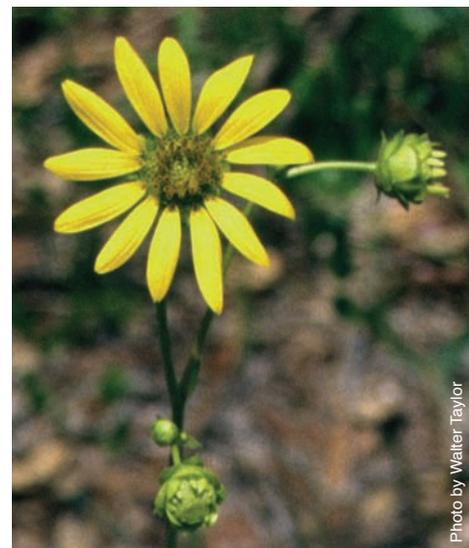


Photo by Walter Taylor

Silphium compositum

Both *Silphiums* are good attractors of butterflies, native bees and other pollinators, and birds will eat the seeds.

The stems contain a gummy or resinous substance, and Native Americans chewed stems to clean their teeth. Cherokees also used the plants medicinally.



The State Wildflower license plate supports Florida native wildflower planting, education and research. Get the plate and help fill our state with wildflowers!



Planting

Both species can be found in nurseries in one gallon containers, but Bigleaf Silphium is not widely available.

Seeds

Seeds are commercially available; you also can collect your own when flowering heads are dry. Break them apart to separate the seeds. As a perennial, both species persist in the landscape and are known to reseed on their own. For best results, plant seeds shortly after collection and keep the soil surface moist until germination occurs in about 3 weeks. To get more even and faster germination, first cold-stratify the seed by keeping it moist in planting media and refrigerated for 30 days. Seed will begin to germinate in 4 days and complete germination in 2 weeks.

Plants

Space plants about 2 feet apart. Because both species are able to tolerate some drought, water deeply and thoroughly to wet the soil at least 7 inches down around the plant until well-established, but only as often as needed.

Care

Once established in the right soil, plants should not need extra water, but watch for extra-long droughts, especially in the spring, and water deeply as needed. Plants can be cut back after flowering if desired. On Starry Silphium, cut the flowering portion only, leaving the leafy stems. Bigleaf Silphium can be cut back to the basal leaves.



Silphium compositum basal leaves

Site Conditions

Although the natural range of Starry Silphium is the west side of the peninsula, it performs well through much of the state. It is fairly drought-resistant, and also does well in moist soils. Full sun to partial shade is needed for good flowering.

Bigleaf Silphium naturally occurs in sandhills, so it is even more drought tolerant than Starry Silphium and does well in dry, sandy soils. It also tolerates moist, well-drained soils, but may grow taller under those conditions. Full sun is needed for best flowering.

Neither species is salt tolerant.



Photo by Christina Evans



Silphium astericus



Silphium astericus

Since both species of *Silphium* occur north to the Mid-Atlantic States, it is important to purchase plants that were originally propagated from Florida progeny for best performance.

CAUTION