

Glossary of Terms

As you use the Polk County Plant Database, the terms that appear in the plant profile may be new to you. Below are the definitions of the terms you will see in the database to make searching and understanding the database easy.

Botanical Name:

The botanical name of a plant (using binomial nomenclature-meaning they have two names) refers to the genus and the species of the plant. When you see a botanical plant name it will read as follows:

Genus species

The genus name is always first, and capitalized, and the species name is second and lowercase. The name is either in *italics* or underlined. So for a plant, it would look like this:

Helianthus debilis

The advantages of knowing the botanical name of a plant is that the botanical name is the same all over the world, so you know you will always be referring to the same plant wherever you go. This comes in handy at the nursery. If you are looking for a specific plant and you refer to it by its botanical name, you will be making sure you are getting the exact plant you want.

Common Name:

Most people refer to plants by their common name. Some plants have multiple common names (for example *Liriope muscari* 'Variegata' is known as Monkey Grass, Aztec Grass and Variegated Liriope) and they can easily be confused or have the same common name as another plant. It is helpful to learn the botanical name of a plant when you are at a nursery so that you make sure you purchase the exact plant you want. Otherwise common names are useful and much easier to pronounce.

Light Requirement:

Sun, shade, partial shade and sun or shade will be plant light requirements indicated in the plant profile. A plant can be grown in full sun if it is in the sun the majority of the day (six hours or more). A partial shade plant needs 3-5 hours of sunlight each day, preferably at the least intense part of the day. A full shade plant requires shade for the majority of the day. If it does get a few hours of sun it should be at the least intense part of the day.

Height/Spread:

The height and spread of the plant given in the plant profile refer to the mature size of the plant. Make sure that you give the plant at least that much room to grow to minimize future maintenance problems.

Flower/Foliage:

These are the characteristics of a particular plant that will create visual interest in the landscape. Variegated foliage, unusual leaf shape and colorful flowers or berries may be notable and desirable characteristics.

Native Status:

In Florida, native status is determined as a plant naturally growing in Florida before the mid- 16th century, when the first Spanish colonists arrived. This can include naturalized invasive exotic plants which were here prior to the mid- 16th century as well as naturalized exotic plants intentionally introduced by Native Americans prior to European arrival.

Wildlife:

As wildlife habitat is diminished, it is important for us to create a place for them in our own yards. Habitat is created by providing a source of food, water, and shelter for animals. The plants in the database that provide berries for birds and nectar and larval food sources for butterflies are indicated.

Soil Type:

There are many different types of soil in Polk County. Sandy, well-drained soils are found in some areas, while poorly drained soils can be found in other areas. And in many areas (particularly in new developments) fill soils are present. We recommend that you have a soil test conducted prior to planting in the yard (the Master Gardeners at the UF/IFAS Polk County Extension Service do this for a nominal fee). Most yards in Polk County are sandy and require drought-tolerant plant material. If you have a sunny, dry location look for plants marked “well-drained” and “drought-tolerant”. If you have lots of shade or low swale-like areas that are slow to drain after a rainfall event, look for plants that “like wet feet” or “can tolerate wet/moist soils”.

Demonstration Garden:

Each plant in the database is featured in a Florida-friendly Demonstration Garden. A demonstration garden is a garden that is open to the public featuring Florida-friendly design, installation and maintenance practices. The plants in a demonstration garden are Florida-friendly and labeled accordingly.

Nurseries:

The nurseries listed in the plant profiles are local nurseries that carry the plants listed in the database. Nursery stock changes frequently and the list will be updated accordingly.

Design Features:

The plants in the Polk County Plant Database are all wonderful choices for Polk County yards and the design features tab will inform you how each plant can be used in the landscape and what plant combinations will complement the selected plant.