

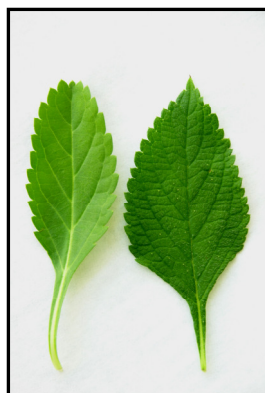
Nature Notes

...from Sharon

Take a walk down the Saylor Trail and look for the delicate blue porterweed along the trail and near the trail's chickee hut—just south of the first beach access from parking area #3 near Alice's bench. This is a small shrub, referred to as a sub-shrub because it usually only gets up to 12 inches high (excluding the flowers) and trails along the ground. There are over 60 species world-wide of porterweeds that are part of the verbenaceae family.

It makes a nice perennial groundcover that bears tiny bluish-purple flowers—a favorite of the zebra long-wing (the Florida State Butterfly). In addition, this plant provides a food source for the Tropical Buckeye caterpillars and a nectar source for Gulf Fritillary, Julia, and the Large Orange Sulphur butterflies. These plants love full-sun to partial shade and are often found in disturbed areas. Due to moderate salt and drought tolerance, it makes a good plant for coastal areas.

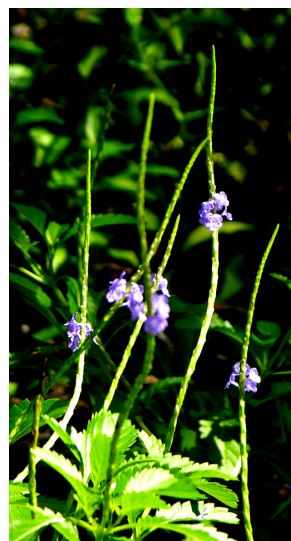
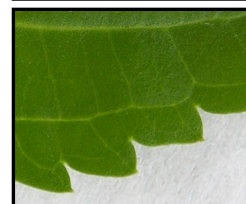
Blue Porterweed (*Stachytarpheta jamaicensis*)



The native Blue Porterweed (*S. jamaicensis*) is commonly mistaken for the imported *S. urticifolia* which may be sold as a native by some nurseries. Watch for the differences to get the real thing. At the left are two leaves.

The one at the extreme left is native and the right side is the non-native *S. urticifolia* that comes from Asia. To the far right are close-ups of the two leaves. The one on the top, the non-native *S. urticifolia*, has hair and a waffle-like texture. The bottom leaf is from the native Blue Porterweed and is glabrous or smooth, with fewer and more distinctive tooth margins. Leaves of both are opposite, ovate to broadly lanceolate, and 2-8 cm long. Roger Hammer, Native Plant

Society, has an article describing differences in native and non-natives species at <http://www.dade.fnpschapters.org/pastnewslets/2001/newslet102.html#Anchor10>.



This plant is an excellent starter in a home butterfly garden. In addition to butterflies in your garden, this plant also provides year-round color. Approximately two to four small, blue flowers open at a time on green, spear-like spikes. Flowers appear slowly up the stem, but each flower lasts only a single day. Florida is currently losing pollinators at a rapid rate. By planting natives and encouraging pollinators, you are helping in this cause. These busy butterflies also help your garden produce those lovely flowers you can enjoy. If a non-native is planted, there is a possibility of cross-pollination and depletion of native plants, so please plant native.

These plants are commonly called porterweeds throughout the Caribbean and Florida, in reference to the medicinal properties bestowed upon them. A foaming, porter-like brew, much like beer, is made from at least one species. This concoction has been used for fever, as a wash for skin irritations, to relieve constipation, and to rid intestinal parasites. Whether it works or not is unsubstantiated by the medical field.