

LOOK AGAIN !

The Melastoma Family is represented by approximately 4,000 species all around the world, including many with handsome flowers. Its members are nearly all tropical, though, and only two are found in our area.

The species we can claim are Meadow Beauty, or Deergrass (Rhexia virginica) and Pale Meadow Beauty (R. mariana). They are stiff plants with opposite, toothed trinerved leaves and showy flowers with four petals arising from an expanded receptacle, or hypanthium, which in fruit becomes an urn-shaped capsule. The conspicuous bright yellow anthers are unusual: long, curved, and bearing a short spur near the point of attachment to the filament.



RHEXIA VIRGINICA

Rhexia virginica is our commonest species. It has bright, deep purple flowers and a square stem ridged with four thin membranous wings.

R. mariana has a wider distribution but in the mountains usually grows at lower elevations. The petals are pale rose (pure white in one coastal form) and the stems are angled but devoid of wings. Its leaves are narrower than those of R. virginica and have tapered rather than rounded bases.

Several other species of Rhexia occur in the Southeast, but as might be expected of a tropical plant family they are much more at home in savannahs and bogs on the coastal plain.

Dick Smith