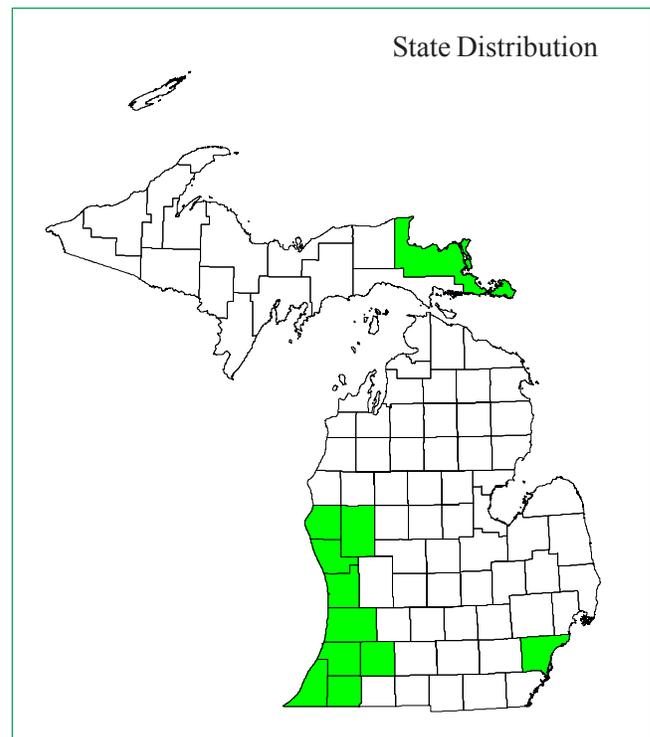


Rhexia virginica L.

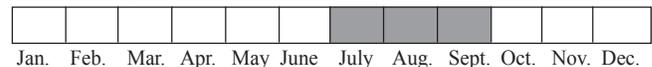
meadow-beauty



Photo by Gary Reese



Best Survey Period



Legal status: State special concern

Global and state rank: G5/S3

Other common names: meadow pitchers

Family: Melastomataceae (melastome family)

Total range: Meadow-beauty is primarily concentrated along the Atlantic Coastal Plain from Nova Scotia to northern Florida, and inland from Virginia across southern portions of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri, south to the Gulf of Mexico. Disjunct populations are found in Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York and Ontario.

State distribution: Michigan occurrences of *Rhexia virginica* are at least 100 miles disjunct from its main distribution and although more widespread, the main distribution includes the entire Atlantic Coastal Plain (Reznicek 1994). For these reasons, it can be considered an Atlantic Coastal Plain disjunct species in Michigan. It is known from approximately 40 locations in the state, the majority of which are in the

southwestern Lower Peninsula. Two occurrences were recently discovered in Wayne County in 1990 and 1994, and in 1995 a population was found in Chippewa County in the Upper Peninsula, the only known population north of Newaygo County.

Recognition: This relatively small herbaceous plant (2-10 dm tall) grows from often tuberous-thickened, fibrous roots and produces strikingly beautiful flowers with **showy pink-purple petals (2-3 cm broad) and contrasting bright yellow stamens. The narrowly winged, stem is subequally four-sided with flat faces.** The stem nodes are somewhat bristly as is the glandular flask-shaped floral tube. The **simple, ovate to lance-ovate shaped leaves are opposite and have from 3 to 5 prominent arcuate nerves.** The similar *Rhexia mariana*, var. *mariana* (Maryland meadow beauty), Michigan's only other *Rhexia* species, exhibits a stem with two opposing faces of the stem wider and darker green than the other two faces. The leaves are distinctly narrower than those of *R. virginica*, and the petals much paler, ranging from light pink to white.



Best survey time: Due to its striking pink flowers, meadow-beauty is most easily located when in flower during July and August. It can also be easily recognized when in fruit during late August to September. With its opposite, prominently veined leaves, it can be identified as early as June or July, depending upon latitude and yearly weather conditions. However surveys are not recommended this early unless one is quite familiar with the plant.

Habitat: Throughout Michigan, meadow-beauty has been found in coastal plain marshes, sandy lake edges, dune swales, seepages, sandy marshes, sandy, peaty edges of wetlands, and sandy intermittent wetlands. Although it appears to be less conservative than many of Michigan's other Coastal Plain disjunct species in terms of habitat, it does show an affinity to locations which have a fluctuating water table. It is frequently found in association with other Coastal Plain disjunct species, including such plants as *Rhynchospora macrostachya* (beak-rush), *Eleocharis melanocarpa* (spike-rush), *Solidago remota* (lakes flat-topped goldenrod), *Bartonia paniculata* (panicled screw-stem), and *Rhexia mariana* var. *mariana* (Maryland meadow beauty).

Biology: Meadow beauty flowers in late summer and fruits from late August through September. Throughout its range it is known to hybridize with other *Rhexia* species (Gleason and Cronquist 1991) and it may hybridize with *Rhexia mariana* in Michigan, though it is yet to be documented.

Conservation/management: Meadow-beauty is undoubtedly sensitive to changes in hydrology, and maintenance of the natural hydrology of its habitat is critical. Activities in adjacent uplands that may adversely impact its wetland habitat should be avoided and preservation of natural coastal plain marsh habitat will be particularly important for maintaining quality habitat for the species.

Research needs: Further survey work is needed to adequately assess the status of *Rhexia virginica* in Michigan.

Related abstracts: coastal plain marsh, panicled screw-stem.

Selected references:

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Abstract citation:

Higman, P. J. & M. R. Penskar. 1996. Special plant abstract for *Rhexia virginica* (meadow beauty). Michigan Natural Features Inventory, Lansing, MI. 2 pp.

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Michigan State University Extension is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity organization.

Funding for abstract provided by Michigan Department of Natural Resources-Forest Management Division and Wildlife Division. Updated September 2000

