
Wildflower Spot – August 2007
John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

WANDFLOWER

Gaura spp.

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These long-blooming plants (May-October) create an airy effect in the garden. White or pink flowers are borne on slender, wiry stems that move easily with breezes. The four petals are bent backwards, and the stamens and pistil bend downwards in front; the cross-shaped stigma is typical of this family of Evening-primroses. Only a few flowers are open on the stalks at one time, resulting in a delicate appearance. Lance-shaped leaves are sparse, and develop closer to the base.

Gaura does well in hot, dry climates; with a long taproot, the plant can withstand drought. A great perennial that grows in an airy, bushy clump about four feet tall with a three-foot spread, it does well in containers, informal borders, or wildflower gardens. Preferring full sun, it can tolerate partial shade, and will grow in poor soils, although moist, well-drained soil is better for good growth.

The generic name “*Gaura*” comes from the Greek word *gauros*, meaning “proud”, referring to the charming flowers. *Gaura biennis* is native



to southeastern Virginia and the piedmont and mountain areas as well. *Gaura lindheimeri*, usually found in nurseries, is native to Louisiana, Texas and Mexico. Many cultivars can be found with names like “Whirling Butterflies”, “White Fountain”, and “Blushing Butterflies”, with soft pink flowers over compact green foliage. ❖