



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## *Physostegia virginiana*<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

This native, herbaceous perennial grows up to about 3-feet-tall in one season, flowering in mid-summer to fall in prominent spikes (Fig. 1). Plants provide the landscape with the same effect as snapdragons. Flowers are arranged in four rows along the spike forming a showy head of white to rose-purple inflorescence.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Physostegia virginiana*

**Pronunciation:** fye-soe-STEE-jee-uh ver-jin-nee-AY-nuh

**Common name(s):** False Dragonhead, Obedient Plant

**Family:** *Labiatae*

**Plant type:** perennial; herbaceous

**USDA hardiness zones:** 4 through 10A (Fig. 2)

**Planting month for zone 7:** year round

**Planting month for zone 8:** year round

**Planting month for zone 9:** year round

**Origin:** native to North America

**Uses:** naturalizing; cut flowers; mass planting

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

### Description

**Height:** 2 to 3 feet

**Spread:** .5 to 1 feet

**Plant habit:** upright

**Plant density:** open

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** medium

**Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** serrate

**Leaf shape:** oblong

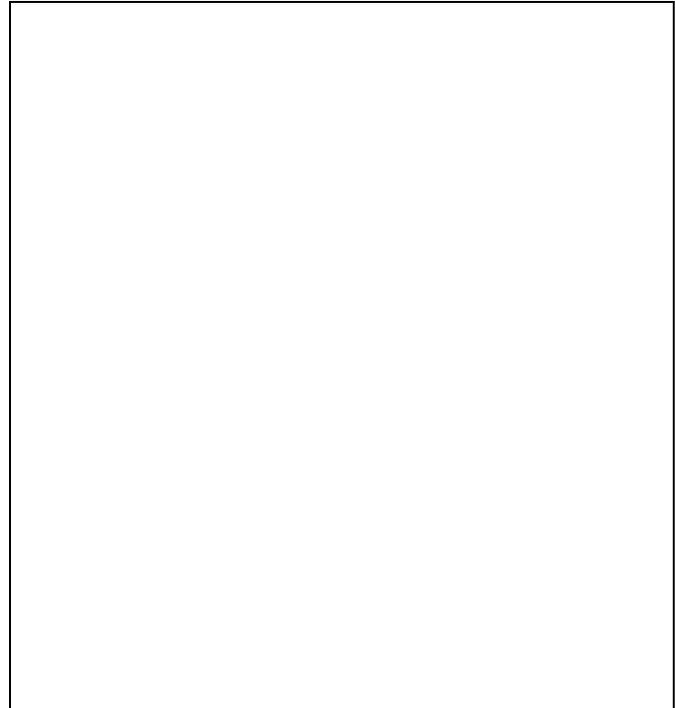


Figure 1. False Dragonhead.

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-477, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October, 1999 Please visit the EDIS Web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Leaf venation:** none, or difficult to see

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

#### Flower

**Flower color:** white; rose-purple

**Flower characteristic:** summer flowering; fall flowering

#### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** unknown

**Fruit length:** unknown

**Fruit cover:** unknown

**Fruit color:** unknown

**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

#### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** usually with one stem/trunk

**Current year stem/twig color:** green

**Current year stem/twig thickness:** thick

## Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun

**Soil tolerances:** occasionally wet; sand; clay; acidic; slightly alkaline; loam;

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Soil salt tolerances:** poor

**Plant spacing:** 12 to 18 inches

## Other

**Roots:** not applicable

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** may self-seed each year

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

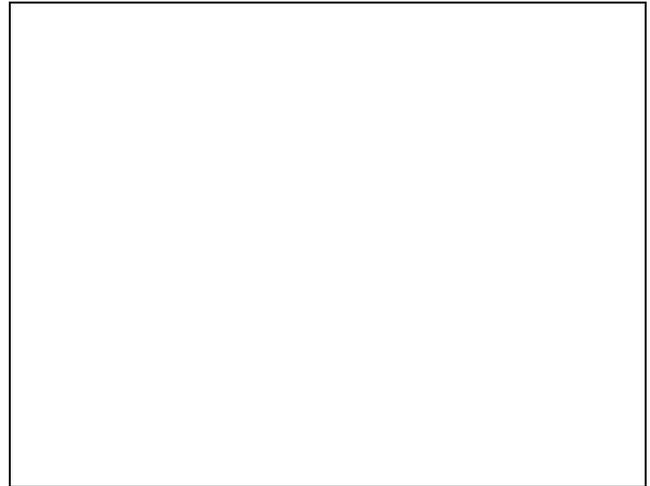
## Use and Management

Dragonhead is used in perennial borders as an accent when it is in bloom. Clumps spread rapidly by seed so be prepared to divide it and replant to control the lateral spread of the plant. They are especially suited to wet soils and suffer unless they receive irrigation in dry weather. Expect them to be shorter in dry landscapes.

Cultivars and varieties have been selected for flower color and include var. *alba* with pure white flowers; 'Bouquet Rose' with pink flowers; and 'Variegata' with green and white variegated leaves. 'Summer Snow' is reportedly less invasive than the species.

### Pests and Diseases

A rust fungus occasionally spoils the plant.



**Figure 3.** Flower of False Dragonhead