

ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

September 2023

Throughout the history of humanity, plants have played a vital role in our survival by providing us with food, materials for construction and crafting, medicine, and many other benefits. One of the thousands upon thousands of plant species utilized by humans is *Eupatorium serotinum*, more commonly known as late-flowering thoroughwort or late boneset.

A member of the Asteraceae family (which also includes daisies, sunflowers, and dandelions (NHPBS)), *E. serotinum* is a perennial plant that thrives in wet environments, making the swamps of Florida an ideal habitat for this species. *E. serotinum* can also be found all along the east coast of the United States. This plant blooms in late summer and early fall, so there is a chance you might be able to spot some growing near a source of water at this time of year! The thin stems of this plant range from green to reddish purple, and they are covered in fine hairs (a condition known in botany as “pubescence”).

The leaves of this plant are lanceolate, meaning that they are wider and rounded at the base before tapering to a point, and the edges of the leaves are serrated. ([Flora of North America](#), [Wildflowers of the United States](#)). *E. serotinum* produces white flowers that form in clusters at the tips of the stems. Its flowers make it a popular choice for pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and moths, who feed on the flowers’ nectar ([Illinois Wildflowers](#)).

Not only is *E. serotinum* important to pollinators, it also played a role in the medicinal practices of some populations in the United States. Specifically, *E. serotinum* was used by some peoples as a febrifuge, or a medicine that reduces fever (Hutton, 2010). The medicinal properties of this plant were attained through the process of decoction, or boiling the flowers (Lawson et al., 2020).



Note that the medicine made from *E. serotinum* was prepared by experts who were knowledgeable in herbal medicine, and if prepared incorrectly or if too much is ingested, it can result in illness, so DO NOT try it at home!

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