

Florida's Native Bromeliads:

Leatherleaf Airplant



Scientific name:

Tillandsia variabilis Schlecht.

Former name:

Tillandsia valenzuelana

Other common name:

Soft-leaved wild pine

Status in Florida:

Threatened

Threats to this plant in

Florida: Mexican bromeliad weevil (*Metamasius callizona*), illegal collecting, habitat destruction



Distribution: Florida, West Indies, Mexico, Central and South America

Distribution in Florida: Broward, Collier, Hendry, Highlands, Martin, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Okeechobee Counties

Occurrence in Florida: Occasional

Habitat: Moist, shaded habitats (hammocks, cypress swamps)

Description: Tank epiphyte; plants usually single (not clustered); grows to 30-50 cm (12-20 in.) tall; 15-20 leaves with fine scales, soft, green-gray or silvery (may have rose or purplish coloring), tapering at the top; outer leaves are 2-3 cm (3/4 - 1 1/8 in.) wide at the base; simple flower spike with reddish or purple floral bracts (up to 3.5 cm [1 3/8 in.] long), violet petals (3.5 cm [1 3/8 in.] long), and white sepals (6 mm; 1/4 in.)

Time of flowering: Spring - fall

References

- Coile, Nancy C. 2000. *Notes on Florida's Endangered and Threatened Plants*. FDACS/DPI, Bureau of Entomology, Nematology and Plant Pathology, Botany Section. Contribution No. 38, 3rd ed., Gainesville, FL.
<http://www.virtualherbarium.org/EPAC>
- Flora of North America Association. 2000. *Flora of North America, Vol. 22*.
<http://flora.huh.harvard.edu/FNA>
- Florida Natural Areas Inventory. 1997. *Matrix of Habitats and Distribution by County of Rare/Endangered Species of Florida*. Florida Natural Areas Inventory/The Nature Conservancy.
<http://www.fnai.org>
- Long, Robert W. and Olga Lakela. 1976. *A Flora of Tropical Florida*. Banyan Books, Miami.