

BEAUTIFUL PAWPAW

Deeringothamnus pulchellus Small

Synonyms: *Deeringothamnus rugelii* (B.L. Robins.) Small var. *pulchellus* (Small) D.B. Ward; *Asimina pulchella* (Small) G.A. Zimmerman

Family: Annonaceae (custard apple)

FNAI Ranks: G2/S2

Legal Status: US-Endangered FL-Endangered

Wetland Status: US-FAC+ FL-UPL



Field Description: Low, deciduous **shrub** 8 - 12 inches tall, with 1 to several erect or arching **stems** from a taproot. **Leaves** alternate, leathery, oblong, 1 - 2.5 inches long, with veins visible on both upper and lower surfaces; **leaf tip** rounded or notched. **Flowers** fragrant, solitary on stalks arising in the angle between leaf and stem on new shoots of the season, blooming only after fire or disturbance; **petals** 6 - 10 per flower, 0.5 - 1 inch long, white, strap-shaped, curved backwards when fully opened; **sepals** 3, broadly triangular. **Fruit** 3 inches long, fleshy, green, resembling a lumpy bean pod, with dark brown seeds, about 0.5 inch long.

Similar Species: Beautiful pawpaw is distinguishable from other similar pawpaws

beautiful pawpaw

Deeringothamnus pulchellus

such as *Asimina* spp. by having darker green leaves, swollen red nodes at the leaf base, much smaller flowers, and a generally prostrate growth habit.

Related Rare Species: Rugel's pawpaw (*Deeringothamnus rugelii*) has yellow petals that are erect to slightly recurved while beautiful pawpaw has white to pink, strongly recurved petals. Four-petal pawpaw (*Asimina tetramera*) is a much taller plant, growing up to 3m tall and has differentiated inner and outer petals, the latter maroon in color.

Habitat: Open slash pine or longleaf pine flatwoods with wiregrass, saw palmetto, and dwarf live oak in the understory.

Best Survey Season: Spring; late March - April; will re-sprout and flower all year following fire. Most stems are annual, dying back in winter, but some occasionally survive for 2 years.

Range-wide Distribution: This species occurs in 2 disjunct parts of Florida, in Charlotte and Lee counties and SE of Orlando in Orange County.

Conservation Status: This is a Florida endemic that is known only from 2 small disjunct areas in Charlotte and Lee counties and Orange County. About 2/3 or populations occur on unprotected private lands and many are small in size. The rate of residential and agricultural development is very high where this species occurs and these activities have likely caused significant decline in this species' numbers in the past. Low flowering and fruiting rates and low pollinator visitation rates increase this species' vulnerability to declines and local extirpations from stochastic events or harmful disturbance.

Protection and Management: Burn every 2-4 years in growing season; avoid disking or other soil disturbance

References: Coile 2000, Johnson 1999, Kral 1960, Kral 1983, Small 1926a, USFWS 1998, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a, Wunderlin and Hansen 2011.