

## CREAMFLOWER TICK-TREFOIL

*Desmodium ochroleucum* M.A. Curtis ex Canby

**Synonyms:** *Meibomia ochroleuca* (M.A. Curtis ex Canby) Kuntze

**Family:** Fabaceae (pea)

**FNAI Ranks:** G2G3/S1

**Legal Status:** US-none; FL-Endangered



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**Field Description:** Perennial **herb** with trailing, hairy stems to 1 m long, pressed against the ground with only the flowering branches erect. **Leaves** alternate, with 3 leaflets and 2 small, leafy, triangular bracts (**stipules**) at base of leaf stalk; **leaf stalk** to 5 cm long, hairy. **Leaflets** 2.5 - 6.1 cm long, entire, oval to diamond-shaped with bluntly pointed tips, somewhat leathery, smooth, and veiny. **Flowers** small, creamy-white, with a typical pea-flower shape and large erect banner petal; in loose, open clusters at or near the top of the plant. **Fruit** a flattened pod with 3 - 5 segments; pods deeply notched along one side, veiny, and hairless except along edges.

**Similar Species:** Round-leaf tick-trefoil or beggar-lice (*Desmodium rotundifolium*) is vining, but it has large, round leaflets, pink-purple flowers, and pods covered with hooked hairs. Hoary tick-trefoil (*Desmodium canescens*) has hairy stems and leaflets with similar shape and texture, but it is a large, erect plant with pink-purple flowers.

**Related Rare Species:** None in Florida.

**Habitat:** Upland mixed woodland, disturbed sites, and hammocks (?); over limestone.

**creamflower tick-trefoil**

*Desmodium ochroleucum*

**Best Survey Season:** Summer to early fall.

**Range-wide Distribution:** Historically known from NJ west to MO and south, this species is now rare throughout its range.

**Conservation Status:** Only one population is known in FL; it occurs in a state park.

**Protection and Management:** Avoid clearcutting and soil disturbance in upland hardwood forests. Control exotic pest plants such as Chinese privet and Japanese honeysuckle.

**References:** Coile 2000, Isely 1990, Radford et al. 1968, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.

