

LONGSPURRED MINT

Dicerandra cornutissima R.B. Huck

Synonyms: none

Family: Lamiaceae (mint)

FNAI Ranks: G2/S2

Legal Status: US-Endangered; FL-Endangered



Field Description: Low **shrub** that can grow up to 45 cm tall, with numerous stiff, erect, square **stems** arising from a woody base. **Leaves** are about 1.5 cm long, opposite, entire, narrow, and needle-like with a minty fragrance. The **flowers**, grouped in leaf axils, are less than 1.2 cm long and rose-purple with dark purple lines and dots, the throat whitish. The **flower tube** is sharply bent. The four **stamens** extend beyond the corolla. The **anthers** are lavender or white, each anther half with a long pointed spur.

Similar Species: Feay's prairie clover (*Dalea feayi*), a frequent legume of scrub and sandhill can look similar vegetatively, having short, narrow, dark green leaves and the similar low shrub clumping habit of the longspurred mint. The prairie clover lacks the strong fragrance of the mint. Currently there are no other *Dicerandra* species known to occur in Marion or Sumter counties in Florida.

Related Rare Species: Nine of the eleven *Dicerandra* species occur in Florida and eight are endemic to Florida. Rare mint species also found in central Florida include Garret's mint (*Dicerandra christmanii*), Titusville balm (*D. thincola*), scrub mint (*D. frutescens*) and Lakela's mint (*D. immaculata*). These mints all resemble longspurred mint vegetatively, but can be distinguished from each other by their flower characteristics and geographic location.

Habitat: Openings or disturbed areas in white sand scrub and sandhill on central Florida ridges, with scrub oaks, sand pine, and lichens. Also found on paths, firelines, and roadsides.

Best Survey Season: Summer-fall; September-October, but leaves, habit, and smell are distinctive all year.

Range-wide Distribution: Endemic to Marion and Sumter counties, Florida.

Conservation Status: Habitat degradation and habitat loss, mainly through deficient land management, and land development and conversion, has greatly reduced the already restricted historical range of the longspurred mint. All known populations of the mint are distributed among one public conservation land, one state maintained roadside right-of-way, and a few private lands. The state's Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway (MHCCFG) harbors 60% of the total number of mints within a relatively small area from U. S. Interstate 75 (I-75) west to State Road 200 in Marion County. The Florida Department of Transportation manages the mint (ca. 6%) scattered along the upper slopes of the north and southbound lanes of I-75 in the vicinity of the MHCCFG. The remainder of longspurred mint plants (34%) are located on private property (western Marion County) and scattered along roadsides that wind through two neighborhoods, one north and one south of the MHCCFG core population. One small group of about 100 plants occurs in a powerline corridor that runs through private property in Sumter County. Only the MHCCFG and to a lesser degree the FDOT I-75 corridor afford long-term protection to this federally listed species.

Protection and Management: Degradation of scrub and sandhill natural communities remain a concern although aggressive management, like removal of sand pine and prescribed burning, has helped to increase the number of mints at many locations and open up new locations within the MHCCFG. While it is not known exactly how the mint responds to fire, it favors the open, sandy patches that are maintained by fire in scrub and sandhill. The mint responds well to some soil disturbance and is found linearly along fire breaks in both scrub and sandhill. Careful and routine management of the invasive species, cogon grass (*Imperata cylindrica*) and natal grass (*Melinis repens*) is necessary within the MHCCFG, while the non-native Asian crabgrass (*Digitaria bicornis*) and cogon grass pose the greatest problem along the I-75 corridor. Limit the use of heavy equipment in mint areas and if mowing is required (as may be necessary in some areas of the I-75 corridor), do so after flowering and fruiting have taken place. Continue to pursue conservation of areas within subdivisions and private property.

References: Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) 2017, Wunderlin R. P. and B. F. Hansen 2011, Chafin 2000, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) 1985, USFWS 2008, Huck R. B. 1981, Huck R. B. 1984, Kral R. 1982.

bent flower
tube

