

SAVANNA BALM

Dicerandra immaculata var. *savannarum*

Lakela

Synonyms: *Dicerandra frutescens* Shinners
var. *savannarum* (Huck) D.B. Ward

Family: Lamiaceae (mint)

FNAI Ranks: G1T1/S1

Legal Status: US-Endangered; FL-Endangered



Flower without spots; stems reclining on the ground. Photo © Scott Ward.

Field Description: Low **shrub**, stems to 40 cm tall, square with low ridges on the angles, bushy in the sun, lax in the shade, forming mats or sprawling hummocks. **Leaves** about 2.5 cm long and 1 cm wide, opposite, narrowly oval with rounded tips and inrolled margins, covered with glands. **Flowers** 2 - 3 per cyme in leaf axils, less than 2 cm long, pink with no spots or lines; 2-lipped with rounded lobes; tube smoothly curved, not sharply bent; stamens extend beyond the flower, **anthers** with tiny spurs. **Stems** and **leaves** have a strong mint odor.

Similar Species: Florida balm (*Dicerandra densiflora*) and coastalplain balm (*Dicerandra linearifolia* var. *robustior*), both occur in longleaf pine sandhills in central Florida and are herbaceous annuals, rather than woody perennials.

Related Rare Species: All 6 central FL species of balm (*Dicerandra*) are rare. Scrub mint (*Dicerandra frutescens*), federally and state-endangered, resembles savanna balm vegetatively, but the flowers are cream, white, or pale pink with purple lines and dots and purple anthers and the tube is sharply bent. Longspurred mint (*Dicerandra cornutissima*) and Titusville balm (*Dicerandra thinicola*) both have distinct spots and a dark pink, bent corolla tube, with the former being endemic to Marion and Sumter counties and the latter to Brevard County. Also see Garrett's mint (*Dicerandra christmanii*). The other variety within this species is Lakelas balm, (*Dicerandra immaculata* var. *immaculata*). Savanna balm has decumbent stems that root at the nodes, compared to Lakela's balm which has erect stems that do not root at the nodes. Additionally, leaves of Savannas balm are larger, on average about 2.5 cm long by 1 cm wide, compared to Lakela's balm whose leaves are on average about 1.8 cm long and 0.3 cm wide.

Habitat: Coastal scrub; on paths and disturbed areas.

Best Survey Season: Summer-fall; primarily September - November, sporadically all year.

Range-wide Distribution: Savanna balm is endemic to St. Lucie County, FL.

Conservation Status: This species is a perennial herb that occurs in the southeastern United States where it is restricted to St. Lucie County, Florida. Residential and transportation related development caused severe habitat loss and fragmentation. There are no longer any naturally occurring, wild populations remaining. Two introduced populations are located on protected lands where ongoing management and monitoring is crucial to their persistence. Lack of fire or dominance of nonnative invasive plant species could both extremely and negatively impact populations.

Protection and Management: Purchase and protect privately owned sites. Control foot and off-road-vehicle traffic. Eradicate exotic pest plants. Use occasional fire to open up habitat.

References: Coile 2000, Eisner et al. 1990, Huck 1987, Huck 2001, Kral 1983, Menges 1992, USFWS 1986b, USFWS 1998, USFWS 2021, Weakley, A. S. and the Southeastern Flora Team 2024, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.