

WILD COTTON

Gossypium hirsutum L.

Synonyms: none

Family: Malvaceae (mallow)

FNAI Ranks: G4G5/S3

Legal Status: US-none FL-Threatened

Wetland Status: US-FACU*+ FL-FAC



Kim Alexander

Field Description: Shrub with a gangly growth habit, up to 12 feet. Stems have coarse hairs, especially on younger branches. The heart-shaped, generally 3-lobed, dull green leaves are 2 to 6 inches long with long petioles. White, hibiscus-like flowers, about 2 inches across with 5 petals, each usually with a red spot at the inside base, turn an overall dark pink with age. The rough, brown, triangular fruit is a capsule which opens to release dark brown seeds inside fluffy, white to brownish, cottony fibers.

Similar Species: None

Related Rare Species: None in FL.

Habitat: Higher portions of rock barrens, on coastal berms, on hammock edges, and in ruderal areas, usually in full sun.

wild cotton

Gossypium hirsutum

Best Survey Season: All year.

Range-wide Distribution: South Florida, West Indies, Mexico, Central and South America.

Conservation Status: Listed state-threatened and tracked as vulnerable, this species is vouchered from 12 counties in Florida.

Protection and Management: Protect habitat from clearing, development and erosion. Eradicate invasive plant species.

References: Wunderlin and Hansen 2011, Little 1979.