

FRAGRANT PRICKLY APPLE

Harrisia fragrans Small ex Britton & Rose

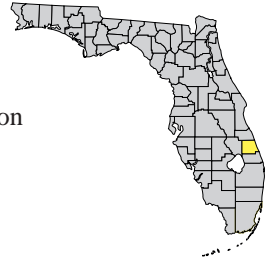
Synonym: *Cereus eriophorus* Pfeiff. & Otto
var. *fragrans* (Small ex Britton & Rose) L.D. Benson

Family: Cactaceae (cactus)

FNAI Ranks: G1/S1

Legal Status: US–Endangered FL–Endangered

Wetland Status: US–UPL FL–UPL



Billy B. Boothe

Field Description: Erect tree cactus, with slender, cylindrical, spiny stems 3 - 16 feet tall, with 10 or more ridges, sometimes branched or leaning. **Spines** gray with yellow tips, 9 - 13 per cluster, 1 - 1.5 inches long, one spine longer than the others. **Flowers** showy, solitary, 5 - 8 inches long, with a long, scaly floral tube; **petals** numerous, long and narrow, fragrant, white when flowers open at night and turning pink the next morning; inner petals without teeth at the tip. **Fruits** usually one per plant, red, round, 2 inches across, with wooly spines.

Related Rare Species: Simpson's prickly apple (*Harrisia simpsonii*), found on FL's east coast in mangroves and in coastal thickets and strands, is quite similar to fragrant prickly apple but lacks the single, conspicuous, long spine; spines 7 - 14 per cluster, yellow with dark tips, 0.5 - 1 inch long; inner petals toothed at apex; fruits red. Aboriginal prickly apple (*Harrisia aboriginum*) occurs on FL's SW coast on shell mounds; spines 7 - 9 per cluster, less than 0.5 inch long, inner petals toothed; fruits yellow.

Fragrant prickly apple

Harrisia fragrans

Habitat: Scrubby flatwoods and xeric hammocks on the Atlantic Coastal Ridge, with sand live oak, myrtle oak, cabbage palm, and prickly pear.

Best Survey Season: Flowers April–May and September–October; fruits July–October.

Range-wide Distribution: Endemic to FL; this species now occurs only in St. Lucie County. Historically it was reported from as far north as Brevard County and also in Monroe County Keys and mainland.

Conservation Status: Fragrant prickly apple occurs in 1 preserve.

Protection & Management: Preserve upland coastal habitats; monitor known populations; protect plants from off-road-vehicles and plant poachers with fences; remove exotic species; avoid use of herbicides in right-of-way maintenance; effect of fire is unknown.

References: Austin 1984a, Benson 1982, Coile 2000, IRC 1999, Rae 1995, Small 1920, Small 1935, USFWS 1998, Ward 1979, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.

