

CHIGGERY GRAPES

Heliotropium verdcourtii Craven

Synonyms: *Tournefortia hirsutissima* L.

Family: Heliotropiaceae (heliotrope)

FNAI Ranks: G5/SNR

Legal Status: US-none FL-Endangered

Wetland Status: US-none+ FL-none



© Jim Surdick

Field Description: A sprawling vine or decumbent shrub to 8m tall. The alternate simple ovate leaves are approximately 18 cm long by 10 cm wide with hairs on both surfaces and have tapered tips. New branches are also hairy. The white 2.5 mm flowers occur on one side of a curved spike. The 5 mm white fruits can be present anytime of the year.

Similar Species: A hairy large leaved sprawling decumbent shrub on an Everglade tree island is somewhat unique. The leaves can resemble the common tree island associate, possum grape (*Cissus verticillata*), however chiggery grapes has white fragrant flowers on a curved spike to help separate the two species.

Related Rare Species: Sea lavender (*Heliotropium gnaphalodes*), state-endangered, is a shrub with spatulate leaves that are crowded on the twigs and densely silky tomentose.

chiggery grapes

Heliotropium verdcourtii

Habitat: Hydric hammocks, baygalls, rockland hammocks, strand swamps, forest edges and ruderal habitats.

Best Survey Season: Flowers March to August

Range-wide Distribution: Tropical Mexico, West Indies, Central, South America, and in Florida the southern peninsula and the Keys. Species is considered abundant in Jamaica and was recently reported from Texas (Richardson and King 2009).

Conservation Status: Listed state-endangered, this species is vouchered from five counties in South Florida.

Protection and Management: Eradicate invasive exotic plant species from tree islands. Because of this species sprawling habit it is often found growing intermixed with other species so caution should be used when using foliar herbicides. Restore and maintain natural wetland hydrology.

References: Wunderlin and Hansen 2011.