

BLODGETT'S SWALLOWWORT

Metastelma blodgettii A. Gray

Synonyms: *Cynanchum blodgettii* (Gray)

Shinners

Family: Apocynaceae (dogbane)

FNAI Ranks: G1G2/S2S3

Legal Status: US-none; FL-Threatened



Flowers and twining stem. Photo by Gary Knight.

Field Description: Twining **vine** with opposite, simple, linear to lanceolate **leaves** that are approximately 13 mm long and 6 mm wide. Stems and leaves produce a white sap if broken. **Flowers** are small, white, 5-parted, campanulate (bell-shaped) and occur in a cyme **inflorescence** with the leaves. The **fruit** is a slender follicle that contains wind-dispersed seeds.

Similar Species: Fragrant swallow-wort (*Metastelma northropiae*) has much wider leaves and occurs in rockland hammocks and coastal strands.

Related Rare Species: Other members of the milkweed (Apocynaceae) family that are rare and listed in the state include all five species of the *Matelea* genus found in Florida and several species of *Asclepias*, such as Curtiss' milkweed (*Asclepias curtissii*) and green milkweed (*Asclepias viridiflora*).

Blodgett's swallowwort

Metastelma blodgettii

Habitat: This species primarily occurs in pine rocklands on limestone soils.

Best Survey Season: Spring-fall.

Range-wide Distribution: In addition to occurring in south Florida, this species is also found on several islands in the Bahamas.

Conservation Status: This species has a very limited range in the state, only occurring in south Florida in Miami-Dade, Collier, and Monroe (both the keys and mainland) counties. There are likely about 40-50 extant populations, but many of these exist on very fragmented pieces of pine rockland habitat where fire exclusion can be a persistent issue. Additional threats include climate change-associated sea level rise for those populations occurring in the keys, as this species does not tolerate salt water flooding well. Development in the places where this species is not protected is also a threat. In fact, many populations have been extirpated from places where it occurred historically, and even fairly recently from continued development in the greater Miami area.

Protection and Management: Protect pine rockland habitat and apply prescribed fire where possible.

References: Wunderlin and Hansen 2011, Wunderlin et al. 2018.