

FEVER TREE

Pinckneya bracteata (Bartr.) Raf.

Synonyms: *Pinckneya pubens* Michx.

Family: Rubiaceae (coffee)

FNAI Ranks: G4/S2

Legal Status: US-none; FL-none



Flower cluster with showy pink bracts, small flowers, and opposite leaves.

Photo by Amy Jenkins.

Field Description: Shrub or small tree up to 6 m tall, with opposite ovate to elliptical leaves from 5 - 20 cm long by 3 - 12 cm wide, moderately pubescent below. Flowers are produced in small clusters at branch tips, tubular, 1.5 - 2.5 cm long, greenish yellow mottled with brown or purple and with one or more calyx segments greatly enlarged, leaflike, showy, and varying from pink to yellowish to white.

Similar Species: Although *Pinckneya* is a monotypic genus, another member of the Rubiaceae, *Cephalanthus occidentalis* is vegetatively similar in its growth habit, preference for wetland habitats, and having mostly opposite leaves. *Cephalanthus occidentalis* is common state-wide and *Pinckneya bracteata* only occurs in the panhandle and N. Florida south to about Marion County. While *Cephalanthus* leaves can be variable, *Pinckneya* leaves are always moderately pubescent.

Related Rare Species: There are no other related species that are rare. Fever tree is the only species in the genus *Pinckneya*.

Habitat: Creek swamps and bogs. Margins of streamheads in habitats termed streamhead pocosins, bayheads, branch bays, and seepage swamps.

Best Survey Season: Spring-fall; May-August. Leaves are diagnostic throughout the growing season.

Range-wide Distribution: South Carolina, Georgia, Florida.

Conservation Status: This species has a restricted range as a regional endemic, and there are few protected populations. Conversion of habitat to pine plantations and to agriculture are the two main threats. Included in this is the construction of farm ponds and stock ponds, usually done in stream headwaters.

Protection and Management: More data is needed on extent of occurrences. Fever tree occurs in wet areas and likely requires maintenance of proper hydrology.

References: NatureServe, Wunderlin and Hansen 2011



Fever tree flower with large pink bract. Photo by Amy Jenkins.