

TINY POLYGALA

Polygala smallii R.R. Sm. & Ward

Synonyms: *Polygala arenicola* Small

Family: Polygalaceae (milkwort)

FNAI Ranks: G1/S1

Legal Status: US-Endangered FL-Endangered

Wetland Status: US-none+ FL-FACW



© Robert Gundy

Field Description: Perennial **herb** with 1 - 4 usually unbranched stems to 4 inches tall; if branches are present, they are often buried in sand and the plants appear tufted. **Leaves** to 0.5 inch wide and 2 inches long, often taller than the flower heads, lance-shaped and slightly wider toward the tip, alternate, succulent, crowded on the stem. **Flowers** small, numerous in a crowded head at the top of the stem, yellow-green, with 2 wing-like sepals, 3 small sepals, and petals fused into a keel with a projecting fringe.

Similar Species: Bachelor's buttons or candyroot (*Polygala nana*) flowers are usually bright yellow, sometimes greenish-yellow; its leaves are distinctly wider at the tip, almost spoon-shaped. It occurs in wet pine flatwoods.

Related Rare Species: See Lewton's polygala (*Polygala lewtonii*) in this guide.

Habitat: Pine rocklands, scrub, sandhills, and open coastal spoil piles.

tiny polygala

Polygala smallii

Best Survey Season: All year.

Range-wide Distribution: Endemic to Atlantic Coast Ridge of SE FL.

Conservation Status: Of 11 known populations, 7 occur in managed areas and 4 occur on lands that may soon be purchased for conservation.

Protection and Management: Purchase and protect intact habitats on the Atlantic Coast Ridge. Use prescribed fire to create and maintain sandy openings. Eradicate exotic pest plants. Monitor known populations.

References: Bradley and Gann 1995, Coile 2000, IRC 1999, USFWS 1998, Smith and Ward 1976, Ward 1979, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.



© Michael Jenkins