

## SMALL-FLOWERED MEADOWBEAUTY

*Rhexia parviflora* Chapman

**Synonyms:** none

**Family:** Melastomataceae (meadow-beauty)

**FNAI Ranks:** G2G3/S2

**Legal Status:** US-none; FL-Endangered



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**Field Description:** Perennial herb to 41 cm tall, usually shorter. **Stems** square, more or less hairless, except for hairy leaf nodes. **Leaves** 15 - 30 mm long, opposite, oval with broadly pointed tips, sparsely hairy, with 3 conspicuous veins and finely toothed, hair-tipped margins; only the leaves at midstem have **leaf stalks**. **Inflorescence** appears leafy due to large bracts. **Flowers** less than 2 cm across with 4 white (rarely pale pink), nearly round petals that fall easily; **stamens** with bright yellow, slightly curved **anthers**; flowers face outward. **Fruit** with a short neck and round body.

**Similar Species:** There are 11 species of meadow-beauty with white or pink flowers in the FL Panhandle. The most common, pale meadow-beauty (*Rhexia mariana*), has white to pale pink flowers, narrow leaves without leafstalks, distinctly hairy stems, and flowers more than 2 cm across. It has only a few narrow bracts in the inflorescence. It tends to be weedy and occurs in drier habitats. Compared to *Rhexia petiolata* and *Rhexia nuttallii*, anthers are longer, 3 - 3.5 mm compared to 1 - 2.5 mm, and they are longer than the filaments instead of shorter.

**Related Rare Species:** Panhandle meadow-beauty (*Rhexia salicifolia*), state-threatened, looks similar to *Rhexia parviflora*, but flowers are lavender-pink and the stem is covered in glandular hairs. Leaves are turned at right angles to the ground so surfaces face out rather than up.

**Habitat:** Seepage slopes, margins of dome swamps, depression marshes, and evergreen shrub ponds. The species occurs mainly in areas where there are few other plants because of typically high-water levels. Soils where this species grows are sandy-loamy and poorly drained typically of the Pamlico, Pantego, Rains, and Rutledge series (Schotz 2008).

**Best Survey Season:** Summer; June - August.

**Range-wide Distribution:** FL Panhandle and 2 adjacent counties in SE AL.. Four of the five documented element occurrences in Alabama were first observed after 2000, making the determination of this species' historical distribution in Alabama difficult. Similarly, *R. parviflora* was collected/observed in Georgia only once in 1940 and is currently classified as having historically occurred there.

**Conservation Status:** Logging and wetland drainage have nearly eliminated this species from private lands. *R. parviflora* is threatened by habitat elimination/degradation from development, fire exclusion, ditching, draining, road construction, and forestry operations/site preparation. About 20 populations are protected on Eglin AFB and Apalachicola National Forest.

**Protection and Management:** Avoid filling, ditching, draining, or logging in wetlands. Avoid placing roads and firebreaks in ecotones. Prevent run-off and sedimentation into ponds and wetlands. Exclude off-road-vehicles from wetlands. Apply prescribed fire every 2 - 3 years to uplands, allowing fires to burn into wetlands.

**References:** Bounds 1987, Coile 2000, Godfrey and Wooten 1981, James 1956, Kral 1983, Kral and Bostick 1969, Tobe et al. 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2011, Wunderlin et al. 2018.

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