

MISTLETOE CACTUS

Rhipsalis baccifera (J.S.Mill.) Stearn

Synonyms: *Rhipsalis cassutha* Gaertn.

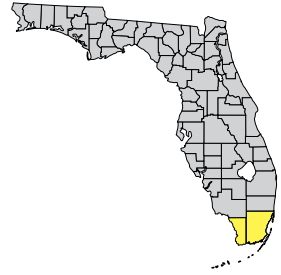
Cassytha baccifera J. S. Miller

Family: Cactaceae (cactus)

FNAI Ranks: G4/S1

Legal Status: US—Mgmt Concern FL—Endangered

Wetland Status: US—none FL—UPL



Roger Hammer

Field Description: Spineless cactus growing in large clusters on tree trunks and branches. **Stems** 3 - 4 feet long, drooping, slender, round, succulent, with small patches of bristles. **Leaves** absent. **Flowers** small, without stalks, solitary, with four or more spreading, white petals; opening day or night and remaining open for up to 8 days. **Fruit** round, white, attached directly to the branch.

Similar Species: Other cacti in FL that grow on tree branches, such as orchid cactus (*Epiphyllum phyllanthus*) and nightblooming cactus (*Hylocereus* spp.), have flattened or winged stems and showy flowers. Pencil-tree (*Euphorbia tirucalli*) has green, leafless, erect stems and persists in dumps and old homesites; it is a ground-dwelling species with milky sap.

Related Rare Species: Several cactus species are endangered in FL; see in this guide: fragrant prickly apple (*Harrisia fragrans*) and key tree cactus (*Pilosocereus robinii*).

Mistletoe cactus

Rhipsalis baccifera

Habitat: Branches of trees in rockland hammocks and mangroves.

Best Survey Season: All year.

Range-wide Distribution: FL (plants reported from Seminole County are cultivated), West Indies, South and Central America, Africa, Sri Lanka.

Conservation Status: Mistletoe cactus is known from only 1 conservation area in FL.

Protection & Management: Prevent clearing and development in rockland hammocks and mangroves. Enforce mangrove protection laws. Purchase and protect remaining fragments of rocklands. Eradicate exotic pest plants.

References: Britton and Rose 1937, Coile 2000, IRC 1999, Small 1933, Tatje 1980a, Ward 1979, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.

