

## MISTLETOE CACTUS

*Rhipsalis baccifera* ssp. *baccifera* (Soland. ex J. Mill.) Stearn

**Synonyms:** *Cassytha baccifera* J.S. Miller;  
*Rhipsalis cassutha* Gaertn.

**Family:** Cactaceae (cactus)

**FNAI Ranks:** G4TNR/S1

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



**Field Description:** Spineless **cactus** growing in large clusters on tree trunks and branches. **Stems** 0.9 - 1.2 m 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 (*Selenicereus* 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*).

**Habitat:** On branches of trees or on limestone rock in rockland hammocks and mangroves.

**mistletoe cactus**

*Rhipsalis baccifera ssp. baccifera*

**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 and 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.

