

MOUNTAIN AZALEA

Rhododendron canescens (Michx.) Sweet

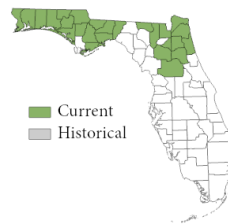
Synonyms: none

Family: Ericaceae (heath)

FNAI Ranks: G5/SNR

Legal Status: US-none FL-Commercially
Exploited

Wetland Status: US-FACW-+ FL-FACW



No Image
Available

Field Description: Perennial, deciduous shrub. Plants can grow up to 6 m tall. Twigs and petioles are covered with thick, long hairs. Leaves are alternately arranged, oval to elliptic shaped and range from 2-10 cm long. Flowers typically appear before the new leaves develop. Characterized as very fragrant, the flowers are pale pink to almost white, with the tube slightly darker. The flowers range from 1.3-1.7 cm long and have hairs on the outer portions. The fruit is an elliptical to slightly curved capsule (FNA 2009, Godfrey and Wooten 1981, Herring 2005).

Similar Species: Five *Rhododendron* species occur in Florida (Wunderlin et al, 2017). Mountain azalea can be distinguished from the other four species based on the combination of characters of having deciduous leaves, hairy scales on winter buds, flowers light to dark-pink, lacking yellow pigment on upper lobe, and blooming before the leaves appear (Godfrey and Wooten 1981).

Related Rare Species: Orange azalea (*Rhododendron austrinum*), state-endangered, is the only orange- or yellow-flowered azalea in FL; it flowers March - April. Winter buds are hairy, and leaf margins have tiny teeth with short, spiky, transparent hairs that point toward the leaf tip.

Habitat: Bay swamps, flatwoods, hammocks, and floodplain forests; often along streams.

Best Survey Season: Spring.

Range-wide Distribution: From Texas east to North Carolina with northern-most occurrence in Illinois. In Florida, occurring from Escambia County east to Jefferson County and continuing east from Hamilton County to Nassau County and south through Marion County.

Conservation Status: This species is found throughout the Panhandle and in north-central Florida. Avoid altering natural wetlands. Restore and maintain natural wetland hydrology (timing and amount). Eradicate invasive exotic plant species.

Protection and Management: Protect from collecting. Avoid ground disturbance.

References: (FNA) Flora of North America Editorial Committee. 2009. Flora of North America north of Mexico, Vol. 8: Magnoliophyta: Paeoniaceae to Ericaceae. Oxford University Press, New York. Godfrey, R. K and J. W. Wooten. 1981. Aquatic and wetland plants of the southeastern United States – Dicotyledons. The University of Georgia Press, Athens, GA. Herring, B. J. 2005. Rare plant survey of the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Natural Areas Inventory, Tallahassee, FL. Florida Greenway – Year 2. Unpublished report submitted to the Office of Greenways and Trails. Florida Wunderlin, R. P., B. F. Hansen, A. R. Franck, and F. B. Essig. 2017. Atlas of Florida Plants (<http://florida.plantatlas.usf.edu/>). [S. M. Landry and K. N. Campbell (application development), USF Water Institute.] Institute for Systematic Botany, University of South Florida, Tampa. Accessed May 31, 2017.