

CHAPMAN'S RHODODENDRON

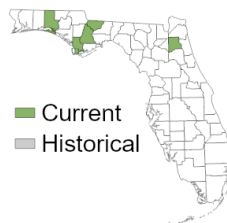
Rhododendron chapmanii Gray

Synonyms: *Rhododendron minus* Michx. var. *chapmanii* (Gray) Duncan & Pullen

Family: Ericaceae (heath)

FNAI Ranks: G1/S1

Legal Status: US-Endangered; FL-Endangered



Field Description: **Shrub**, 0.5 - 2.5 m tall, with stiff, erect **branches** tipped by terminal buds. Young **twigs**, **buds**, and **leaves** covered with small, round, rust-colored scales. **Leaves** 2.5 - 7.5 cm long, evergreen, alternate, wider above the middle, usually with inrolled margins. Pink **flowers** in showy clusters at tips of branches, each flower 13 - 3.8 cm long, with 5 lobes, and 10 short **stamens**. **Fruit** an elongated capsule about 13 cm long, present nearly year-round, covered with rusty scales.

Similar Species: Pinxter-flower (*Rhododendron canescens*) blooms at the same time as Chapman's rhododendron; it is very hairy throughout and has long, curved stamens that extend well beyond the pale pink flower; it is deciduous and blooms before leaves appear. Rusty lyonia (*Lyonia ferruginea*) has a similar habit and leaves with rusty scales; it is distinguished from Chapman's rhododendron by its small, white flowers; rounded fruits in clusters along the twigs; and by a lack of terminal buds.

Related Rare Species: Alabama rhododendron (*Rhododendron alabamense*), state-endangered, is a taller shrub (1.8 - 6.7 m) with deciduous leaves, occurring in upland hardwood forests and on bluffs and banks of streams in the FL Panhandle. Flowers are white, with a distinct yellow blotch on the upper lobe.

Habitat: Transition zones between longleaf pine ecosystems (sandhills, scrubby flatwoods, or mesic flatwoods) and titi bogs dominated by *Cliftonia monophylla*. Many of the uplands have been harvested for longleaf and planted with slash pine. In some cases plants occur from the edge of one titi bog across a low ridge and down to a second parallel titi bog, in which case there is no adjacent uphill habitat (USFWS 1983).

Best Survey Season: Spring; mid-March to mid-April. Shrubs are hard to see without flowers, but may be distinguished when not in flower from most other evergreen shrubs by rusty scales, elongated fruits, and terminal buds.

Range-wide Distribution: Florida endemic. Restricted to 4 counties: Clay, Gadsden, Gulf, and Liberty.

Conservation Status: A large population is well-protected and managed on St. Joseph Bay State Buffer Preserve. The majority of occurrences, however, are on private, unprotected lands. The population on Camp Blanding Military Reservation, Clay County may be introduced.

Protection and Management: Purchase and protect privately owned populations. Burn periodically to stimulate flowering and sprouting. Avoid mechanical site preparation, tree planting, or other soil disturbances; plants re-sprout following light disturbance, but timber harvesting, site preparation, and pine planting will kill plants.

References: Coile 2000, Duncan and Pullen 1962, Godfrey 1988, Schultz and Johnson 1996, Schultz and Johnson 1997, USFWS 1983, Wunderlin and Hansen 2001.

