

FLORIDA SKULLCAP

Scutellaria floridana Chapman

Synonyms: none

Family: Lamiaceae (mint)

FNAI Ranks: G2/S2

Legal Status: US-Threatened; FL-Endangered



Field Description: Perennial **herb** with slender, weak **stems**, 0.3 - 0.6 m tall. **Stems** square, with a very narrow, clear wing along each angle (visible with magnification). **Leaves** less than 4 cm long, very narrow, with a blunt, purple tip; opposite and widely spaced on the stem; minutely gland-dotted, midrib raised beneath, margins inrolled. **Flowers** 2.5 cm long, blue-purple, the upper lip with 3 lobes, the lower lip with 2 lobes and large white spot. **Calyx** with a small purplish "**cap**" (scutellum) that persists when the plant is in fruit. Unlike most mints, skullcaps are odorless.

Similar Species: Helmet skullcap (*Scutellaria integrifolia*), occasionally found in flatwoods, is a coarse, erect plant with narrowly oval, toothed leaves on lower stems. Stems and leaves of some milkworts (such as *Polygala cruciata*) may be confused with Florida skullcap when mixed in with dense groundcover vegetation.

Related Rare Species: See mock pennyroyal (*Stachydeoma graveolens*) and white-birds-in-a-nest (*Macbridea alba*)

Florida skullcap

Scutellaria floridana

Habitat: Grassy openings in wet pine flatwoods, grassy margins of cypress stringers, seepage slopes, transition zones between flatwoods and wetlands.

Best Survey Season: Flowers April - July, depending on timing of fire; may be identified, using magnification, by stems with clear wings and purple leaf tips, throughout the growing season.

Range-wide Distribution: Endemic to Apalachicola River lowlands in Bay, Gulf, Franklin, and Liberty counties.

Conservation Status: Several large populations are protected on the Apalachicola National Forest, but most populations on private lands have been destroyed by conversion to pine plantations.

Protection and Management: Grows with wiregrass in wet flatwoods with sparse canopy cover. Often found growing with another endemic, Chapman's crownbeard (*Verbesina chapmanii*). Burn grassy flatwoods and prairies on a 2-3 year rotation with most fires performed during the early part of the growing season. Avoid soil disturbance or alterations to hydrology.

References: Coile 2000, Kral 1983, Tobe et al. 1998, USFWS 1994c, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.

