

FUZZY-WUZZY AIR-PLANT

Tillandsia pruinosa Sw.

Synonyms: *Tillandsia breviscapa* A. Rich.

Family: Bromeliaceae (pineapple)

FNAI Ranks: G4/S1

Legal Status: US-none; FL-Endangered



D. Karl

Field Description: "Airplant" (**epiphyte**) less than 15 cm tall, usually solitary, rarely in clumps, on branches of trees. **Leaves** densely covered with shaggy, scale-like hairs; crowded and overlapping, with inrolled margins; wide, inflated bases; and narrow, twisted, elongated tips. **Flower spike** short, with 3 - 12 flowers, pink bracts overlapping and covering the stalk. **Flower** less than 2.5 cm long, erect, with 3 purple petals. **Fruit** a narrow, elongated capsule, opening lengthwise into 3 segments; **seeds** with a long white plume.

Similar Species: This is the only bromeliad in FL densely covered with fuzzy scales.

Related Rare Species: Banded wild-pine (*Tillandsia flexuosa*), state-endangered, has spirally twisted, silver-striped leaves and a large, loosely-branched flower spike. It occurs in branches of trees in hammocks and dry woods. Once widespread, banded wild pine is now severely threatened by exotic weevils that destroy "tank bromeliads." Also see many-flowered catopsis (*Catopsis floribunda*) and Fakahatchee guzmania (*Guzmania monostachia*) in this guide.

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Habitat: Wet hammocks and cypress swamps; epiphytic.

Best Survey Season: Spring-summer; recognizable all year.

Range-wide Distribution: FL, W. Indies, Mexico, Central and South America.

Conservation Status: Four occurrences are known, all on conservation lands. Populations have been decimated by plant poachers and draining of swamps and are threatened by an exotic weevil (*Metamazius callizona*) whose larvae tunnel through the plant bases, killing the plants.

Protection and Management: Enforce plant protection laws and prosecute plant poachers. Fund research into weevil control. Protect wetlands from draining, logging, and development.

References: Bennett 1982, Bennett [n.d.], Coile 2000, Correll and Correll 1982, FNA 2000, Frank 2000, Ward 1979, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.

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