

OCALA VETCH

Vicia ocalensis Godfrey & Kral

Synonyms: none

Family: Fabaceae (pea)

FNAI Ranks: G2/S2

Legal Status: US-none; FL-none



Field Description: Perennial vine with nearly hairless stems to 1.2 m in length. Leaves are alternate, deciduous, and compound with 2 - 6 leaflets and 1 terminal tendril. Leaflets 2.5 - 5 cm long, narrowly oblong with rounded tips bearing a tiny bristle. Flowers about 13 mm long, lavender blue to white with a faintly striped banner petal; in long-stalked clusters of up to 18 flowers. Fruit a pod, 4.6 cm long, flattened, with 8 - 12 seeds.

Similar Species: Florida vetch (*Vicia floridana*) and four-leaf vetch (*Vicia acutifolia*) also occur in wet sites. Florida vetch leaflets are shorter and oval; four-leaf vetch leaves are shorter and narrower. Both have smaller flowers and fruits than Ocala vetch, which is a relatively robust plant and has larger flowers and fruits.

Related Rare Species: Many pea family species are rare; for example, sand butterfly pea (*Centrosema arenicola*), state-endangered, and scrub pigeon-wing (*Clitoria fragrans*), state-endangered.

Habitat: Open, sunny marshy, wet thickets along margins of spring runs and streams in a very limited distribution. The most robust populations are found climbing on support plants (as opposed to directly on the ground) such as sawgrass (*Cladium jamaicense*).

Best Survey Season: Spring; April - May.

Range-wide Distribution: Endemic to a small area within Lake, Volusia, and Marion counties in central Florida.

Conservation Status: Seven occurrences are known in FL (as of 2019), within Ocala National Forest and Lake Woodruff National Wildlife Refuge. This species is fairly stable within its very small range. Potential threats include alterations in hydrology and invasive exotic plants. In 2019, USFWS concluded, "After considering the best available information in light of the principles of resiliency, redundancy, and representation, the Ocala vetch is currently viable and is forecast to remain for the next 20 years (2040).

Protection and Management: Protect the natural hydrology of spring runs. Prevent disturbance to streambank vegetation.

References: Coile 2000, Godfrey and Kral 1958, Isely 1990, Ward 1979, Wunderlin et al. 1980, Wunderlin and Hansen 2011, Wunderlin et al. 2018.

