

ABORIGINAL PRICKLY APPLE

Harrisia aboriginum Small

Synonyms: ; *Cereus aboriginum* (Small ex Britton & Rose) Little;

Family: Cactaceae (cactus)

FNAI Ranks: G1/S1

Legal Status: US-Endangered FL-Endangered

Wetland Status: US-FACU*+ FL-UPL



Gil Nelson

Field Description: Erect to reclining cactus with simple or branching, cylindrical, spiny **stems** to 20 feet tall but more often around 10 feet, with 9-11 longitudinal ribs, often leaning on nearby vegetation. **Spines** needlelike, pink when young, becoming grey with brown tips, 7-9 per cluster, up to 0.4 inches long. **Flower buds** densely brown hairy. **Flowers** showy, solitary, tube 4-6 inches long; **petals** not fragrant, white, opening at night, inner petals with teeth at the tip. **Fruits** yellow to orange, about 0.4 inches long, with several hundred dark brown **seeds**.

Similar Species: Simpson's prickly apple (*Harrisia simpsonii*), found on FL's east coast in mangroves and in coastal thickets and strands, is quite similar to aboriginal prickly apple but has a scaly floral tube; fruits red when ripe; yellow spines with dark tips. Fragrant prickly apple (*Harrisia fragrans*) occurs on FL's east coast (St. Lucie County) on shell mounds; spines 9-13 per cluster, 1-1.5 inches long; inner

aboriginal prickly apple

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petals entire; fruits red when ripe.

Related Rare Species: Simpson's prickly apple (*Harrisia simpsonii*), found on FL's east coast in mangroves and in coastal thickets and strands, is quite similar to aboriginal prickly apple but has a scaly floral tube; fruits red when ripe; yellow spines with dark tips. Fragrant prickly apple (*Harrisia fragrans*) occurs on FL's east coast (St. Lucie County) on shell mounds; spines 9-13 per cluster, 1-1.5 inches long; inner petals entire; fruits red when ripe.

Habitat: Shell mounds, coastal strands, upland fringes of mangrove swamps, coastal berms and maritime hammocks.

Best Survey Season: Flowers April- October; fruits July-October

Range-wide Distribution: Endemic to FL; a species with very restricted range, only 9 extant occurrences within Sarasota, Lee, and Charlotte counties. Historically known from Manatee to Lee counties.

Conservation Status: Threatened by horticultural collection, exotics encroachment, sea-level rise, and habitat destruction (especially destruction of shell mounds for road fill material).

Protection and Management: Protect upland coastal habitats; monitor known populations; protect plants from off-road vehicles and plant poachers with fences; remove exotic species.

References: Bradley et al. 2004, eFloras 2008, Gann et al. 2002, Hooten 1991, Fisher 1997, Ward 1979