

LEWTON'S POLYGALA

Polygala lewtonii Small

Synonyms: none

Family: Polygalaceae (milkwort)

FNAI Ranks: G2/S2

Legal Status: US-Endangered FL-Endangered

Wetland Status: US-none+ FL-UPL



Field Description: Perennial **herb** with 1 to many angled stems up to 8 inches tall. **Leaves** to 0.5 inch long, succulent, narrow, wider above the middle, held erect in alternate, overlapping clusters along the stem. **Flowers** small, 0.4 inch long, dark pink, with 2 showy wing-like **sepals**, 3 small green **sepals**, and **petals** fused into a keel with a projecting fringe; flowers in showy, loose spikes on the upper third of stems (inconspicuous self-pollinating flowers also occur on both aerial and underground stems). **Fruit** oblong, twice as long as wide, partially enclosed by 2 sepals; **seed** with a fleshy outgrowth and narrow wings.

Similar Species: Common milkwort (*Polygala polygama*) is 4 - 20 inches tall and forms large clumps with short branches hugging the ground; leaves are spine-tipped and not in clusters; fruits are oval.

Related Rare Species: See tiny polygala (*Polygala smallii*) in this guide.

Lewton's polygala

Polygala lewtonii

Habitat: Sandhill, scrub, scrubby flatwoods, and their transition zones.

Best Survey Season: Spring-summer; February - May

Range-wide Distribution: Endemic to Central Florida ridges in Marion, Lake, Polk, Osceola, and Highlands counties.

Conservation Status: About 43 extant populations are known, most on Ocala National Forest and 9 other managed areas.

Protection and Management: Purchase and protect intact scrubs and sandhills with *Polygala lewtonii*. Use prescribed fire to create and maintain open habitat.

References: Coile 2000, USFWS 1998, Ward 1979, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a, Wunderlin et al. 1981b.