

PEARL BERRY

Vallesia antillana Woods.

Synonyms: none

Family: Apocynaceae (dogbane)

FNAI Ranks: G4/S1

Legal Status: US-none FL-Endangered

Wetland Status: US-none+ FL-UPL



Gil Nelson



Field Description: Shrub or small tree to 12 feet tall with pale, furrowed bark and drooping branches. **Leaves** to 3.2 inches long, simple, narrowly oval with bluntly pointed tips, alternate, entire. **Flowers** about 0.3 inch long, on forking stalks, white, fragrant, tubular with 5 spreading petals; in bud, petals appear twisted. **Fruit** 0.5 inch long, pearly white, oval to pear-shaped. All parts of the plant exude milky sap when broken.

Similar Species: Many tropical shrubs and trees have alternate, elliptic leaves; pearl berry is distinguished by its milky sap and the year-round presence of white flowers and fruits.

Related Rare Species: Pineland allamanda (*Angadenia berteroi*), state-threatened, is a sprawling shrub with milky sap, opposite leaves, and showy yellow, bell-shaped flowers found in pinelands in south FL and the Keys.

pearl berry

Vallesia antillana

Habitat: Rockland hammocks, coastal berms; in lower Keys only.

Best Survey Season: Flowers and fruits appear together on the same tree all year.

Range-wide Distribution: Dade County and Monroe County Keys, FL (historic populations on Monroe County mainland have not been seen in many years); Bahamas, Cuba, Hispaniola.

Conservation Status: Seven populations are known in FL, 4 in state and national parks. Few plants are found at any of the known sites.

Protection and Management: Purchase privately owned sites and manage for conservation, limit clearing and development of tropical hammocks and coastal habitats, eradicate exotic pest plants.

References: Coile 2000, Correll and Correll 1982, IRC 1999, Nelson 1996, Tomlinson 1980, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.