

SOFT-LEAVED WILD-PINE

Tillandsia variabilis Schlecht.

Synonyms: *Tillandsia valenzuelana* A. Rich.

Family: Bromeliaceae (pineapple)

FNAI Ranks: G5/S2

Legal Status: US-none FL-Threatened

Wetland Status: US-none+ FL-UPL



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Field Description: Medium sized rosette-forming airplant, rosettes usually solitary. Leaves spreading and often with a pinkish color. Inflorescence usually a simple spike to 40 cm long. Flowers lavender-blue.

Similar Species: This species is similar to immature rosettes of *Tillandsia fasciculata* and *T. utriculata*. It may be distinguished by the presence of flowering stalks which are fairly short and unbranched, unlike the branched stalks of *T. fasciculata*, and the very long stalks of *T. utriculata*.

Related Rare Species: This species is similar to immature rosettes of *Tillandsia fasciculata* and *T. utriculata*. It may be distinguished by the presence of flowering stalks which are fairly short and unbranched, unlike the branched stalks of *T. fasciculata*, and the very long stalks of *T. utriculata*.

Habitat: Hammocks and cypress swamps; epiphytic.

Best Survey Season: Flowers Spring to Fall

Range-wide Distribution: Mexico, West Indies, Central and South America. In Florida, restricted to the southern peninsula north to Highlands and Okeechobee counties.

Conservation Status: The state of Florida lists this species and most other rosette-forming bromeliads as threatened or endangered. The Mexican bromeliad weevil (*Metamasius callizona*) has killed many plants since its accidental introduction in Broward County in 1989. These weevils were first reported in Hendry County in 1997. This insect burrows into, and destroys, the leafy rosettes of this epiphyte. Since most *Tillandsia* species are slow to mature, protecting the trees in primary habitats will encourage the development of healthy epiphyte populations. Research has been conducted for possible biological control agents, and a test release of a parasitic fly was performed in 2007.

Protection and Management: The state of Florida lists this species and most other rosette-forming bromeliads as threatened or endangered. The Mexican bromeliad weevil (*Metamasius callizona*) has killed many plants since its accidental introduction in Broward County in 1989. These weevils were first reported in Hendry County in 1997. This insect burrows into, and destroys, the leafy rosettes of this epiphyte. Since most *Tillandsia* species are slow to mature, protecting the trees in primary habitats will encourage the development of healthy epiphyte populations. Research has been conducted for possible biological control agents, and a test release of a parasitic fly was performed in 2007.

References: Wunderlin and Hansen 2011