Lewton's milkwort
(Senega lewtonii)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms.

Lewton's milkwort is an endangered wildflower endemic to only six counties in Central Florida. It occurs in scrub, sandhill and pine barren habitats where maintenance includes a regular fire regime. It blooms in late winter and spring, attracting a variety of pollinators, especially leafcutter bees, hover flies and bee flies.

Photo by Patricia Burgos

Lewton's milkwort produces open-pollinated flowers as well as two types of self-pollinating flowers — one occurs above-ground and the other underground. The open-pollinated (chasmogamous) flowers are the most noticeable. They are small, dark pink and born on loose, many-flowered terminal spikes. These flowers have three pink winglike sepals and three fringed petals. The petals are fused and form a keel. The above-ground self-pollinating (cleistogamous) flowers are tiny, green and occur in the leaf axils. The underground flowers have no pigment and are born on few-flowered racemes. Leaves are small (up to ½-inch long), linear to spatulate in shape, and succulent. They are alternately arranged. Fruits are oblong capsules, each containing two seeds. Each seed has a hairlike appendage that attracts ants, which help disperse the seeds. The plant has a long taproot that helps protect it during fire occurrence.

Family: Polygalaceae (Milkwort family)
Native range: Marion, Lake, Polk, Osceola, Brevard and Highlands counties
To see where natural populations of Lewton's milkwort have been vouchered, visit www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.
Lifespan: Short-lived perennial
Soil: Dry, sandy soils
Exposure: Full sun
Growth habit: up to 12" tall

Note: Research published in 2023 assigned the New World clade of *Polygala* to the genus *Senega* (Pastore et al). This species was previously known as *Polygala lewtonii* and is likely still listed as such in many online and print resources.

Lewton's milkwort is not commercially available. Visit a natural area to see it.

SCAN FOR FULL PLANT PROFILE:

FLORIDA Wildflower FOUNDATION

FLORIDA WLD FLA STATE WILDFLOWER