

Whitetassels

(*Dalea carnea* var. *carnea*)

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

Also known as Pink prairie clover and Pinktassels, Whitetassels is an uncommon wildflower found in mesic flatwoods, open meadows and pine rocklands. Its distinct flowers bloom in late spring through early fall and are attractive to pollinators, especially bees. The seeds are eaten by birds and other wildlife.

Whitetassels' inflorescence is a dense cone-shaped terminal spike that produces 20 or more tiny pink to pinkish-white flowers with noticeable yellow anthers. Leaves are compound. Leaflets are linear with smooth upper sides and often punctate undersides. Stems are thin, multi-branched and may be erect or decumbent. Fruit is a small legume.

Three varieties of *Dalea carnea* are found in Florida. *D. carnea* var. *albida* occurs in the eastern Panhandle and north/north central peninsula; *D. carnea* var. *gracilis* occurs exclusively in the Panhandle. Both bear white flowers and are also known as Whitetassels. *D. carnea* var. *carnea* is more widespread, occurring throughout the peninsula, and is the only one with pink flowers.

The genus name *Dalea* is an homage to English physicist and naturalist Samuel Dale (1659–1739). The species epithet *carnea* is from the Latin *carneus*, meaning “flesh-colored.”

Family: Fabaceae (Legume, bean or pea family)

Native range: Peninsular Florida

To see where natural populations of Whitetassels have been vouchered, visit www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.

Lifespan: Perennial

Soil: Moist to moderately dry, well-drained sandy or calcareous soils

Exposure: Full sun to high pine shade

Growth habit: 6–18" tall, spreading up to several feet wide

Propagation: Seed

Florida regions of landscape suitability: North, Central, South

Garden tips: Whitetassels works well in a naturalistic planting, or along the edge of a mixed wildflower or butterfly garden. It tends to stay low and spread out, but its loose structure does not form dense mats. It is drought tolerant.

Whitetassels plants are occasionally available from nurseries that specialize in Florida native plants. Visit www.PlantRealFlorida.org to find a nursery in your area.

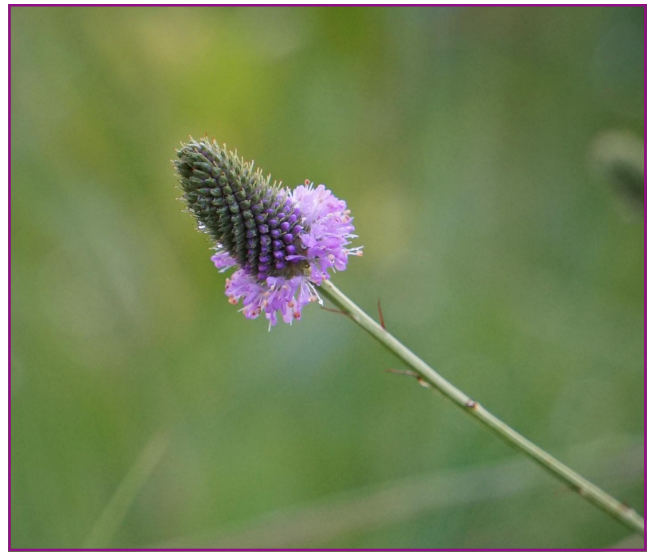


Photo by Emily Bell

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PLANT PROFILE:

