

LAKELA'S MINT NOW PROTECTED

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently determined Lakela's mint, *Dicerandra immaculata*, a small plant found in Indian River and St. Lucie counties, Florida, to be an endangered species. This action was taken in accord with the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. A copy of the final regulation was published in the May 15, 1985, **Federal Register**.

Dicerandra immaculata (Lakela's mint) is a low-growing dome-shaped shrub of the mint family (Lamiaceae). The plants reach 15 inches in height, and bear erect flowers in small cymes at the tips of the stems. The spotless, lavender-rose to purplish (rarely white) petals of the flower separate *Dicerandra immaculata* from other species of this genus occurring in the southeastern United States. *Dicerandra immaculata* was described by Lakela (1963) based on material collected in southern Indian River County, Florida, in 1962. The species is restricted to coastal sand pine scrub vegetation in Indian River and St. Lucie counties. Florida sand scrub habitats are found on relict dunes along former shorelines. The soils consist of highly drained, sterile sands.

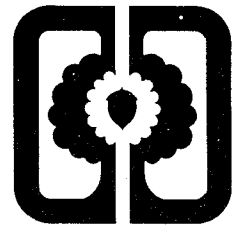
In *Dicerandra immaculata* habitat, sand pine, *Pinus clausa*, forms an overstory, while oaks, *Quercus geminata*, *Q. virginiana*, and *Q.*

myrtifolia, form an understory. Other small trees or shrubs found in this plant community include scrub hickory, *Carya floridana*, cabbage palm, *Sabal palmetto*, saw palmetto, *Serenoa repens*, hog plum, *Ximenea americana*, and tough bumelia, *Bumelia tenax*. Epiphytes, *Tillandsia fasciculata* and *T. recurvata*, are present. *Dicerandra immaculata* is one of the rarest plants known from the sand scrub community type. Rare animals found in *Dicerandra immaculata* include the Florida scrub jay, *Aphelocoma c. coerulescens*, and the scrub lizard, *Sceloporus woodi*. The Florida scrub jay is considered a threatened species by the State of Florida; the scrub lizard is considered rare by the Florida Committee on Rare and Endangered Plants and Animals. Only nine remaining sites of *Dicerandra immaculata* are known. They occur in an area 1/2 mile wide by 3 miles long, between the cities of Vero Beach and Fort Pierce. The plants occur in the vicinity of four small sandhills with an elevation over 45 feet, representing ancient coastal dunes. *Dicerandra immaculata* occurs on soil series of the Astatula, Paola, and St. Lucie sands. All known colonies occur on private property. The continued existence of this species is threatened by sand mining, commercial and residential development, and a

fungal disease affecting the seeds.

Lakela's mint will now receive the full protection of the Endangered Species Act, including prohibitions on import, export, commerce, and removal from areas under Federal jurisdiction. The Service will also develop a recovery plan for this species. Should you have questions concerning this matter, contact Mr. David Martin or Dr. Michael Bentzien at 904/791-2580, or write Endangered Species Field Station, 2747 Art Museum Dr., Jacksonville, FL 32207.

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