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2–3 ft
Nectar



Photo by Andrea England

Conradina canescens

Plants in the *Conradina* or False rosemary genus may look like their namesake cousin, whose leaves are used as a savory cooking spice, but these members of the Lamiaceae (mint) family emit a minty-fresh smell when their leaves are crushed. There are six *Conradina* species found in Florida; only one, *Conradina canescens*, is not considered endangered or threatened.

The plants are evergreen and reward gardeners with a display of fragrant white-lavender blooms.

Description

Conradina are small perennial shrubs that mature into 2- to 3-foot-wide and -tall silvery-green clumps. Their short, needlelike leaves grow densely from upright stems that branch from a main woody stem.

Conradina canescens occurs in the western Panhandle, and is found in dry disturbed areas and on dunes. Short-leaved false rosemary (*C. brevifolia*), a federally listed endangered species, is found only in scrub habitats in Polk and Highlands counties in south Central Florida. It reaches out with graceful fingers that give it a unique character apart from *C. canescens*. Largeflower false rosemary (*C. grandiflora*), a state-listed threatened species, can be found on scrubby sites in coastal counties in the central and southern peninsula. It has larger flowers and a more upright growth. All are very drought-resistant once established.

Prolific flowers cover *Conradina* in spring, and the plant can keep blooming through late fall. This versatile deer-resistant groundcover can be used in mass plantings, as a single specimen or in a pot.



Photo by Ron and Diane Bynum

Conradina grandiflora with needlelike leaves

Planting

Conradina can last three or more years in landscapes. Plant in sandy, well-drained soil, and water until established. *Conradina* releases a chemical that suppresses the growth of other vegetation, including weeds, and thus may be beneficial, but also may restrict growth of other plants close by.

Seeds

Seeds are not commercially available, but may be collected from plants when fresh. Sow in spring in well-drained soil and keep moist until germination occurs.

Butterflies and bees

Conradina is attractive to some butterflies and moths, but it mostly draws native bees, including large carpenter and digger bees. Honey bees also have been seen sampling its nectar.

Plants

Plants are readily available from nurseries specializing in native plants. *Conradina* also can be easily started from cuttings (4-inch non-branching terminal shoots) in well-drained potting soil in small pots. Mist daily and do not allow soil to dry. Prune before transplanting or within one week after transplanting. Pinch tips to encourage branching.

Care

Conradina may be trimmed after flowering, but most gardeners leave it alone and enjoy its beautiful natural form. Sections of older, well-established plants

may die suddenly; remove these to encourage new growth. *C. grandiflora* will tolerate some overhead or drip irrigation. Other *Conradina* species should be watered only during extended dry periods. Because this plant thrives naturally in dry ecosystems, overwatering may cause rot and decline.

Site conditions

Conradina is ideal for dry, sandy soils in full sun. It will thrive on natural rainfall. If your landscape is irrigated on a regular basis, look for a spot that remains dry.

Hardiness zones

Conradina grandiflora is suited for zone 9. *C. canescens* is best for 8A–9B.



Photo by Peg Urban

Conradina grandiflora in a landscape

Of the six *Conradina* species in the state, all but *C. canescens* are endangered or threatened, and thus limited in population.

Because these species can hybridize, it is important to plant the species found naturally in your area to help preserve the distinct genetic identities and ecological roles of these plants. In Polk and Highlands counties, choose *C. brevifolia*. Along the central and southern east coast, choose *C. grandiflora*. Ask your nursery supplier for the species native to your locale.

CAUTION