



Common Name: SANDHILL ROSEMARY

Scientific Name: *Ceratiola ericoides* Michaux

Other Commonly Used Names: Florida rosemary, sand heath

Previously Used Scientific Names: *Ceratiola falcatula* Gandoger

Family: Empetraceae (crowberry) or Ericaceae (heath)

Rarity Ranks: G4/S2

State Legal Status: Threatened

Federal Legal Status: none

Federal Wetland Status: none

Description: Evergreen **shrub** up to 6 feet (2½ meters) tall, rounded, and densely branched; older branches with gray, shredding bark and rough leaf scars; young twigs with dense hairs. **Leaves** less than 5⁄8 inch (8 - 15 mm) long, dark green, needle-like, in pairs set at right angles to each other and appearing to be in whorls of 4 or 6 needles when viewed from the end of the twig; leaves smell strongly of rosemary or, during hot weather, of honey. **Female flowers** and **male flowers** on separate plants, small, papery, yellow to brown, clustered in the angle between leaf and twig, sometimes filling nearly all the spaces between leaves at the ends of the twigs. **Fruit** less than 1⁄8 inch (3 mm) wide, round, yellow, with 2 seeds.

Similar Species: Rosemary resembles no other plant in Georgia's scrub dune habitats. Another aromatic, needle-leaved shrub found in scrub, Ashe's savory (*Calamintha ashei*, see on this website), is less than 2 feet (60 cm) tall and has gray-green needles and showy pink flowers.

Related Rare Species: There are no other species in this genus.

Habitat: Extremely dry sandhills and sand ridges along the east sides of several Coastal Plain rivers; with woody goldenrod, dense patches of lichens, and large areas of bare sand.

Life History: Sandhill rosemary has a whorled branching pattern, each whorl representing one year of growth; plants may be aged by counting the number of whorls (or nodes) on the main stem. Plants studied in Florida scrub begin to set seed between 10 - 15 years; seed production declines between 20 - 30 years. Fruits are eaten by ants, mice, and birds. Sandhill rosemary habitat does not burn frequently or readily, largely due to a lack of fine fuels (grasses). When fires do occur, they tend to be catastrophic, burning most plants to the ground, and killing sandhill rosemary which responds to fire with a flush of germination of seeds stored in the soil seed bank.

Survey Recommendations: Surveys may be conducted all year for this distinctive, evergreen species.

Range: Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, Alabama, and Mississippi

Threats: Protect sand ridges from conversion to pine plantations and pastures. Burn habitat at intervals of 20 - 40 years.

Georgia Conservation Status: Rosemary is known from about 25 sites; one population occurs on a state preserve, another on a military base.

Conservation and Management Recommendations: Burn scrub sites every 20 - 40 years, leaving some areas unburned. Rosemary is killed by fire but will vigorously re-seed. Prevent conversion of sand ridges and scrub to pine plantations or pasture.

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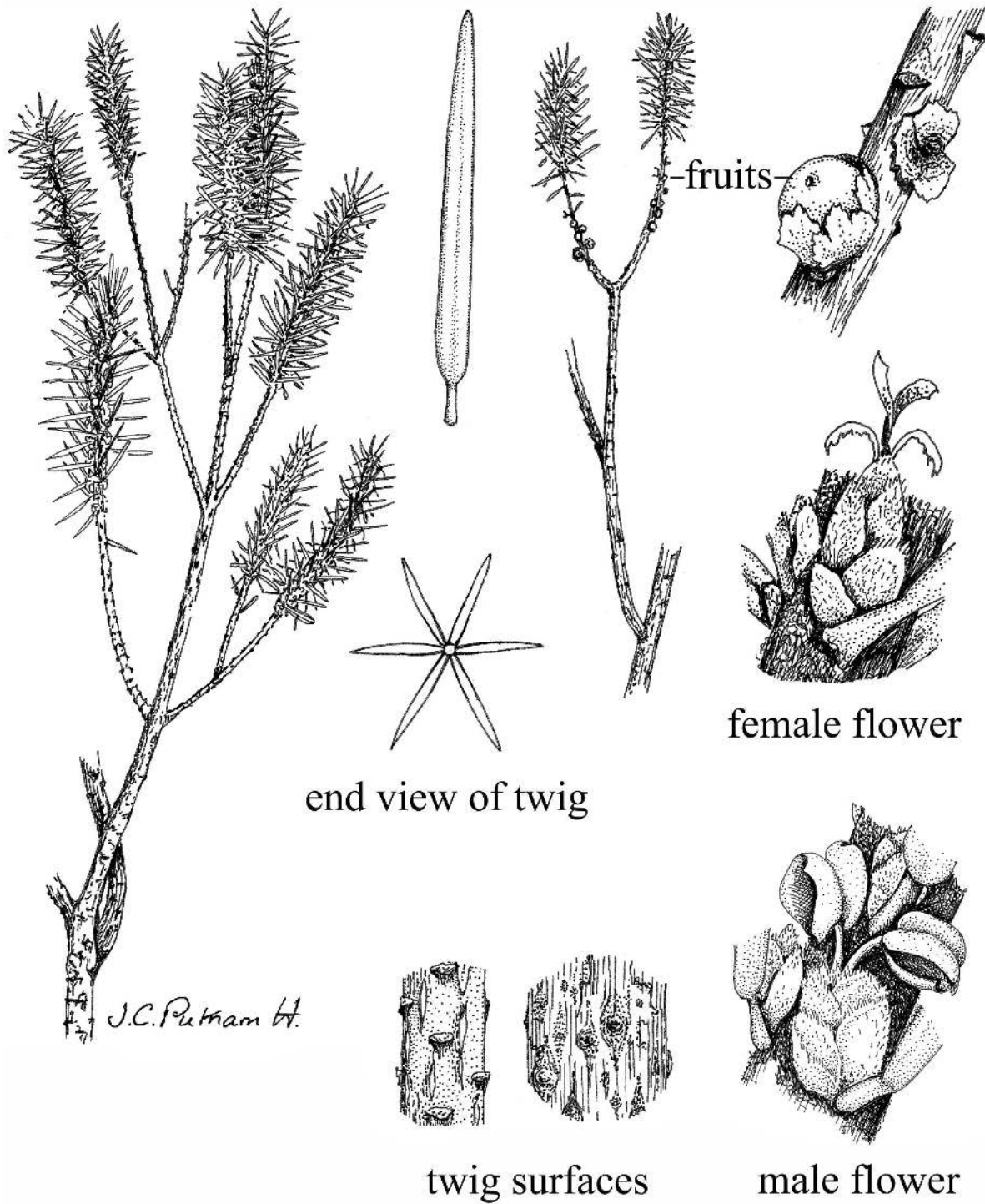
Date Compiled or Updated:

L. Chafin, Oct. 2007: original account

K. Owers, Jan. 2010: updated status and ranks, added pictures

SANDHILL ROSEMARY

Ceratiola ericoides





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Female flowers



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Male flowers