

## The Problem

Smoothbark St. John's-wort and its associated rare plants are sensitive to certain human activities that can result in the loss of the plants. The very limited distribution of the Smoothbark St. John's-wort and the increasing residential development around the ponds and lakes that provide habitat for this species pose a serious threat to the survival of the species.

## What You Can Do

You can play a large role in conserving these rare plants and at the same time help protect your lake's water quality and prevent erosion on your valuable property by following a few simple guidelines.

## Some Guidelines To Follow

*It is best to leave all the vegetation around the lake edge. But if you must clear some:*

**Minimize the clearing of vegetation** around your pond or lake. It is suggested that no more than a 25 foot wide corridor be cleared through the Smoothbark St. John's-wort community on a given lot. Consider a narrow floating dock for access to the water.

**Share access with a neighbor** to minimize the need for removing plants.

**Avoid using fertilizers and pesticides** which can easily run off into the water body, affecting water quality.

**Landscape with low-maintenance native plants** and replant cleared areas to help prevent erosion.

**Encourage your neighbors to follow these guidelines.**



## Property Owners of Sandhill Ponds and Lakefront

For additional information, please contact  
Florida Department of Environmental  
Protection at  
850-245-2809  
or  
Bay County Audubon Society at  
[www.baycountyaudubon.com](http://www.baycountyaudubon.com)  
or  
The Nature Conservancy at  
[www.nature.org](http://www.nature.org)

This document is a cooperative effort  
between Lisa A. and Edwin J. Keppner,  
Bay County Audubon Society, and  
The Nature Conservancy.

## THE PLANT AROUND THE EDGE OF THIS LAKE IS ENDANGERED

While it may seem locally plentiful, Smoothbark St. John's-wort is limited to the edges of sandhill lakes and ponds in northern Bay and southern Washington Counties of Florida. It is found nowhere else in the world. Several other rare species of plants also occur around these lakes and ponds.

Every section of waterfront cleared brings this plant closer to extinction. Please help by considering alternatives to clearing the shoreline and by sharing this information with your neighbors.

## A Very Rare Plant

Found nowhere else on Earth except in this area, Smoothbark St. John's-wort is familiar to anyone who lives on or has visited one of these ponds or lakes. It can be found in dense, broad bands around some of the ponds and can be quite scarce around others where a variety of other woody plants dominate the shoreline. Smoothbark St. John's-wort is listed in Florida's Administrative Code as Endangered.

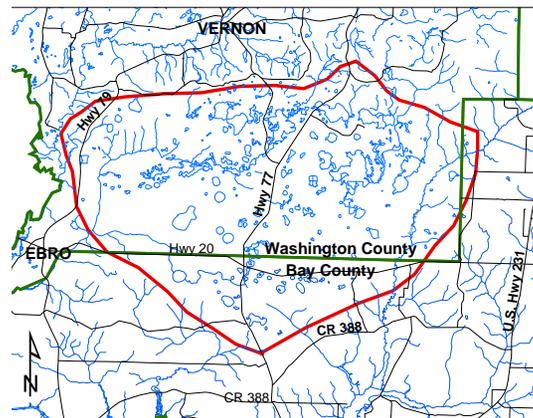
This plant is woody with slender stems, grows to a height of about 13 feet, and grows in water from about 4 feet deep up to the high water line. The flowers are yellow, and the smooth bark sloughs off in curled plates exposing the shiny inner bark. Those plants growing partially submerged produce prop roots along the lower part of the stem that give the plant the look of a red mangrove tree.



Smoothbark St. John's-wort  
(*Hypericum lissophloeus*)

## The Sandhill Lakes and Ponds

In northern Bay County and southern Washington County, Florida there is an area of about 250 square miles with ponds and lakes that appear jewel-like due to their clear, clean water and white sandy basins ringed with green vegetation. Most of these ponds and lakes were formed by water dissolving the underlying limestone. They tend to be very deep, funnel-shaped in cross-section and directly connected to the surficial aquifer. Most do not have an obvious inflow or outflow of water, but some do have seepage streams entering them.



The Range of Smoothbark St. John's-wort

## Why Are They Important?

Water enters the ponds and lakes from rain or surface runoff from the surrounding land and drains through the bottom of the ponds or lakes to the underlying aquifer. Thus, many of these ponds and lakes serve to recharge the Floridan Aquifer that supplies us with high quality drinking and surface water via wells and springs. Because water entering these ponds and lakes ultimately serves as our drinking water, it is essential that we keep it clean. The native plants around these bodies of water help filter impurities and prevent erosion.

## Additional Rare Plants

Several other plants inhabiting the shorelines of our unique Sandhill ponds and lakes are rare and would benefit from your protection. They are:

Panhandle Meadowbeauty (*Rhexia salicifolia*).



Threadleaf Sundew (*Drosera filiformis*)



Crystal Lake Nailwort  
(*Paronychia chartacea minima*)

