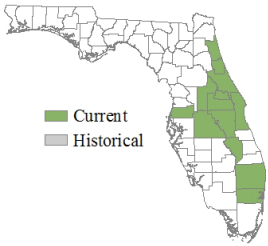
CELESTIAL LILY
Nemastylis floridana Small
Synonyms: none
Family: Iridaceae (iris)
FNAI Ranks: G2/S2
Legal Status: US-none FL-Endangered
Wetland Status: US-OBL FL-FACW



Amy Jenkins

Field Description: Perennial **herb** from a bulb with a single, tall, slender **stem** , occasionally branching on robust plants. **Basal leaves** few, grass-like, sometimes more than 2 feet long. **Stem leaves** small and scattered along the stem. **Flowers** more than 1.5 inches across, with 6 dark blue, spreading **petals and sepals (tepals)**; flowers open around 4 pm and close by dusk. **Stamens** with 3 coiled, yellow anthers; **style** divided into 6 narrow, pointed branches. **Fruit** an erect, oval capsule, about .5 inch long.

Similar Species: Blue-eyed grasses (*Sisyrinchium* spp.) are also in the iris family; they have much smaller blue flowers that are open throughout the day in the spring and summer. Celestial lily is the only iris-like species in FL to open in the late afternoon in the fall.

Related Rare Species: Bartram's ixia (*Calydorea caelestina*), state-endangered, occurs in wet to mesic flatwoods in NE FL. The large blue-violet petals are similar to celestial lily, but appear in early morning and fade by 1: am.

Habitat: Wet flatwoods (often in cabbage palm flatwoods variant), prairies, marshes, cabbage palm hammocks edges.

Best Survey Season: Flowers from 4-6 pm, August - October.

Range-wide Distribution: Endemic to eastern counties of FL, primarily in the St. Johns River drainage.

Conservation Status: Once widespread in eastern FL, this species now occurs in about 15 managed areas, where it may be locally abundant if its habitat is frequently burned.

Protection and Management: Burn flatwoods and prairies every 2 - 3 years. Protect wetlands from draining, ditching, and conversion to pasture and pine plantation.

References: Coile 2, Goldblatt 1975, Kral 1983, MacKiernan and Norman 1979, Small 1931, Ward 1979, Wunderlin and Hansen 211, Wunderlin et al. 218.