

PINEWOODS BLUESTEM

Andropogon arctatus Chapman

Synonyms: none

Family: Poaceae (grass)

FNAI Ranks: G3/S3

Legal Status: US-none; FL-Threatened



Inflorescence exserted, appearing in a 'v-like' shape at Appalachicola National Forest. Photo by Ann Johnson.

Field Description: A **perennial** bunch grass that can form large clumps with stems greater than 1 m tall; basal **leaf sheaths** and upper surface of basal leaf blades appressed-pubescent, often appearing silvery-silky like pinewoods bluestem; **basal leaf blades** mostly 5 - 6 mm wide; **culms** 2.5 - 4.5 mm in diameter; **racemes** rarely included within raceme sheaths at maturity; anthers rarely marcescent; inflorescence branches erect; **inflorescence units** usually 30 - 50 per culm, each with 2 - 4 racemes, **racemes** (2.2-) 2.5 - 6 cm long; **sessile spikelets** 4 - 5 mm long; **lemma awns** mostly 5 - 10 mm long; **rachis internode** pubescence more or less evenly distributed along the internode; inflorescence **peduncles** mostly less than 9 cm long; many or all peduncles longer than the subtending raceme sheaths at maturity, racemes then fully exserted above the apex of the raceme sheath.

pinewoods bluestem

Andropogon arctatus

Similar Species: Scrub bluestem (*Andropogon cumulicola*) is similar but separated by its basal leaf sheaths moderately to densely villous, but not silvery-silky like pinewoods bluestem; basal leaf blades glabrous to sparsely pubescent with spreading hairs, 2 - 2.5 mm wide; culms 1.5 - 2.0 mm in diameter; inflorescence units usually less than 15 per culm, all with 2 racemes and occurring in scrub, scrubby flatwoods, and sandhills in the Florida peninsula.

Related Rare Species: Tawny bluestem (*Andropogon mohrii*) is uncommon and overlaps in some habitats with pinewoods bluestem, such as wet prairie and wet flatwoods. It is differentiated by peduncles all shorter than the subtending raceme sheaths at maturity, at least the bases of the racemes not exerted above the apex of the raceme sheath and inflorescence units with (2-) 4 - 7 (-13) racemes; raceme sheaths (4.1-) 5.3 - 8.0 (-10 - 1) mm wide; hairs of the rachis internode and pedicel yellow-tawny when dry. The hairs of the leaf sheaths are densely spreading as opposed to the sericeous, appressed hairs of pinewoods bluestem.

Habitat: Mesic and wet flatwoods, wet prairie, seepage slopes, upland pine (primarily western panhandle), and minorly disturbed, moist flatwoods.

Best Survey Season: September - November but only after a fire in the current year.

Range-wide Distribution: North FL west to western panhandle of FL and adjacent southern AL

Conservation Status: Species can be abundant where habitat is well managed with fire and severe alterations such as site preparation and draining are excluded. Many populations occur on public lands that are well managed with fire, however, occurrences on private lands are likely few and it is assumed most are not appropriately managed.

Protection and Management: Prefers open, wiregrass-dominated areas with widely spaced pines, often in the ecotone between flatwoods and wet prairies where it can become a dominant grass. Does not tolerate heavily shaded pine plantations, but can persist in lightly shaded ones in moist conditions where wiregrass is also often present. Requires fire to reproduce. Burn grassy flatwoods and prairies on a 2 - 3 year rotation to maintain the open ecotones between saw palmetto flatwoods and wet prairies.

References: Weakley, A. S. and the Southeastern Flora Team 2024, Wunderlin and Hansen 2011



Lower leaf sheath with silvery-silky hairs. Wet flatwoods at Aucilla Wildlife Management Area. Photo by Kelly Anderson.



Growing in wet flatwoods at Aucilla Wildlife Management Area. Photo by Kelly Anderson.