

SOUTHERN SEDGE

Carex austrodeflexa P.D. McMillan, Sorrie, & van Eerden

Synonyms: none

Family: Cyperaceae (sedge)

FNAI Ranks: G3G4/S1

Legal Status: US-none; FL-none



Red rhizome visible; short spikes borne close to the ground. Photo © Scott Ward.

Field Description: Small sedge with **culms** primarily accompanied by pistillate spikes borne on short or elongate peduncles from the same sheathed base. **Staminate spike** 3.6 - 16.8 mm long. Terminal with at least one approximate pistillate spike. **Pistillate spike** with acute lower scales, mostly shorter than the perigynium beak. **Perigynia** body elliptic, with adaxial surfaces lacking hairs, distinctly papillate; narrow beaks, finer spreading trichomes and papillae evident.

Similar Species: There are many species of sedge (*Carex* sp.) in Florida and the panhandle region. Differentiating these species can be difficult and flowering and fruiting bodies are generally essential. Southern sedge has terminal staminate spikes which are 3.6 - 16.8 mm long, and typically have at least one approximate pistillate spike. The perigynia should have narrow beaks with finer spreading trichomes and prominent papillae. The perigynium has an elliptic body with adaxial and abaxial surfaces lacking hairs.

Related Rare Species: Other rare sedge (*Carex*) species in Florida include Bartell's sedge (*Carex baltzellii*), halfsweet sedge (*Carex calcufugens*), Chapman's sedge (*Carex chapmanii*), meadow sedge (*Carex granularis*), golden sedge (*Carex lutea*), and small-toothed sedge (*Carex microdonta*). Differentiating these species can be difficult and flowering and fruiting bodies are generally essential. Southern sedge has terminal staminate spikes which are 3.6 - 16.8 mm long, and typically have at least one approximate pistillate spike. The perigynia should have narrow beaks with finer spreading trichomes and prominent papillae. The perigynium has an elliptic body with adaxial and abaxial surfaces lacking hairs.

Habitat: Canebrakes and acid swamps, very wet loamy pine savannas

Best Survey Season: Flowering February - May.

Range-wide Distribution: Coastal plains from southeastern VA to panhandle FL, west to southern AL.

Conservation Status: As of 2025, only two populations are known in Florida. As a graminoid, the element has likely been overlooked for many years, even by botanists, as the this genus is notoriously difficult to identify and not "showy". Both locations for the element appear to be in intact and good quality natural communities; one on a protected site and one on private land.

Protection and Management: Protect streamhead seepages, bayhead, baygall, and wet pine savanna vegetation from clearing or habitat alteration. Adjacent pine-dominated systems should continue to be under the proper prescribed fire regime for the specific community type (e.g. sandhill).

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



Perigynia glabrous but with prominent papillae (short, rounded projections). Photo © Scott Ward.



Pistillate (female) spikes borne on short stems from the same base as the primary culm. Photo © Scott Ward.