

NAKED-STEM SUNFLOWER

Helianthus occidentalis ssp. *occidentalis*

Riddell

Synonyms: none

Family: Asteraceae (composite)

FNAI Ranks: G5T5/S1

Legal Status: US-none; FL-none



Ray and disk flowers yellow. Photo © Teresa and Richard Ware.

Field Description: Perennial **herb** with basal **leaves** 6 - 15 cm long, 2 - 8 cm wide; **leaves** 1.5 - 5 times as long as wide, rough to the touch, scabrous or hirsute; leaves entire or nearly so; plants lacking multiple pairs of well-developed cauline leaves. Ray and disk **flowers** yellow.

Similar Species: There are four similar sunflower (*Helianthus* sp.) species in Florida with basally disposed leaves. Lake-side sunflower (*Helianthus carnosus*) which also has yellow disk flowers, but has basal leaves 10 - 30 cm long as opposed to 6 - 15 cm long; purpledisk sunflower (*Helianthus atrorubens*) which has purple disk flowers and basal leaves 6 - 20 cm long; variableleaf sunflower (*Helianthus heterophyllus*) which has purple disk flowers and basal leaves 4 - 15 cm long and 2 - 5 times as long as wide; and stiff sunflower (*Helianthus radula*) which has no ray flowers.

naked-stem sunflower

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Related Rare Species: There is one other rare sunflower (*Helianthus* sp.) species in Florida with basally disposed leaves: lake-side sunflower (*Helianthus carnosus*). It is distinguished from naked-stem sunflower by its basal leaves 10 - 30 cm long, 0.5 - 2.0 cm wide; leaves 10 - 20 times as long as wide, glabrous and flowering head 1 (-3); phyllaries 8 - 16 mm long, 3 - 5 mm wide occurring in wet flatwoods and wet prairies of northeast Florida.

Habitat: Rocky or sandy flood-scoured riversides, dry hammocks.

Best Survey Season: Summer-fall.

Range-wide Distribution: MD and DC west to MN, and south to western NC, northern GA, Panhandle FL, and TX.

Conservation Status: This species is known from only two sites in Florida, both of which are unprotected on private land, and populations tend to consist of a small number of plants. Roadside maintenance activities can be problematic when not carefully executed.

Protection and Management: If populations are re-discovered along roadsides, communication should be made with the county Department of Transportation to determine appropriate mowing regimes to keep the habitat open but also maximize reproductive output (e.g. flowering and fruiting).

References: Flora of North America 2023, Weakley, A. S. and the Southeastern Flora Team 2024, Wunderlin and Hansen 2011.



Leaves basally disposed, nearly entire, rough to the touch. Photo © Teresa and Richard Ware.