

WEST'S FLAX

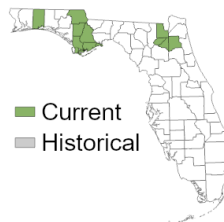
Linum westii Rogers

Synonyms: none

Family: Linaceae (flax)

FNAI Ranks: G1G2/S1S2

Legal Status: US-none; FL-Endangered



John Palis

Field Description: Perennial **herb** with several smooth, narrowly wing-angled **stems** 20 - 50 cm tall. **Leaves** about 13 mm long, decreasing in size upward along the stem, very narrow, erect; leaves on lower half of stem opposite with rounded tips; leaves on upper half of stem alternate with pointed tips. **Flowers** opening in late afternoon at tips of a few branches at the top of the plant with 5 pale yellow, spreading **petals** and 5 fringed **sepals** bearing stalked glands; **stamens** 5; **styles** 5, slender, separate from each other. **Fruit** a small, round capsule with persistent sepals and a tiny, pointed beak.

Similar Species: Florida yellow flax (*Linum floridanum*) leaves are nearly all alternate. Stiff yellow flax (*Linum medium*) has a few opposite leaves near the base, but most leaves are alternate. Some St. John's-worts (*Hypericum* spp.) have 5-petaled, yellow flowers, but have many stamens or oval leaves.

Related Rare Species: Three state-endangered flax species, sand flax (*Linum arenicola*), Carter's flax (*Linum carteri* var. *carteri*), and Small's flax (*Linum carteri* var. *smallii*) occur in pine rocklands in South FL.

Habitat: This species grows in wet flatwoods, depression ponds and margins of pond cypress swamps in open sun.

Best Survey Season: Late spring- summer; June-August.

Range-wide Distribution: Endemic to FL Panhandle and NE FL.

Conservation Status: *Linum westii* is endemic to the Florida panhandle and has been recorded in northeast Florida, though has not been seen in this part of its range for over twenty years. The small flowers only open in the evening, making the plant difficult to spot at other times, therefore it may be underreported. Additionally, depending on precipitation patterns and resulting water levels in its habitat, this species may experience large fluctuations in population numbers from year-to-year. Threats include intensive forestry practices, fire suppression, and drainage alteration. Most extant populations are on protected lands within Apalachicola National Forest, Tate's Hell State Forest, and St. Joseph Bay State Buffer Preserve.

Protection and Management: Burn flatwoods and associated wetlands every 2 - 3 years. Avoid placing roads and firebreaks in wetland ecotones. Protect natural hydrology of flatwoods.

References: Coile 2000, Godfrey and Wooten 1981, Kral 1983, Rogers 1963, Tobe et al. 1998, Ward 1979, Wunderlin and Hansen 2011, Wunderlin et al. 2018.

