

BRITTON'S BEARGRASS

Nolina brittoniana Nash

Synonyms: none

Family: Asparagaceae (asparagus)

FNAI Ranks: G3/S3

Legal Status: US-Endangered; FL-Endangered



Photo © Robert Fitterling.

Field Description: Perennial **herb** with long, stiff **leaves** 3 - 12 mm wide, green (not glaucous) with margins serrate with close-set, tough, cartilaginous teeth; **scape** 0.3 - 1.4 m tall; **capsules** 8 - 10 (12) mm in diameter, symmetrical.

Similar Species: Spanish bayonets (*Yucca* spp.) have large flowers and erect, fleshy leaves with spiny tips.

Related Rare Species: Florida beargrass (*Nolina atopocarpa*), state-threatened, is similar but has leaves 1.5 - 4.0 (-5) mm wide, green and with margins serrate with close-set, tough, cartilaginous teeth; scape 25 - 140 cm tall; capsules 4.0 - 4.5 by 4.0 - 5.5 mm, strongly asymmetrical.

Habitat: Scrub, sandhills, scrubby flatwoods, and xeric hammocks.

Best Survey Season: Spring; March - May, but fruits, leaves, and growth habit are distinctive all year.

Range-wide Distribution: Endemic to central peninsular Florida, mostly along the Lake Wales Ridge, from Marion County, south to Highlands County.

Britton's beargrass

Nolina brittoniana

Conservation Status: More than 90% of Britton's beargrass habitat has been lost to agriculture and development. About 100 populations remain, with half of these occurring on 10 conservation areas.

Protection and Management: Apply prescribed fire to stimulate flowering and eliminate competition by shrubs and trees. Complete purchases of Lake Wales Ridge scrub sites.

References: Coile 2000, Kral 1983, Menges et al. 1996, Weakley, A. S. and the Southeastern Flora Team 2024, Wunderlin and Hansen 2011



Britton's beargrass in flower and fruit. Photo © Francisco Faria.



Britton's beargrass inflorescence with capsules. Photo © Daniel Estabrooks.

