CAROLINA GRASS-OF-PARNASSUS
Parnassia caroliniana Michx.
Synonyms: none
Family: Celastraceae (bittersweet)
FNAI Ranks: G3/S2
Legal Status: US-none FL-Endangered

Main parallel veins of each petal 11-17 (counted at halfway point between base and apex). Photo by Ethan Hughes.

Field Description: Perennial **herb** with rounded or oval **basal leaves** with long **leafstalks** and a single, stalkless, rounded **leaf** on the flower **stalk**. **Flower** solitary at the top of a long, angled stalk, with five white oval petals, each with 9 - 18 green, brown, or yellow veins, the lowest vein much branched (see drawing). **Ovary** is white.

Similar Species: Large-leaved grass-of-parnassus leaves are nearly identical to those of Carolina grass-of-parnassus, but its flower has a green ovary and petals with only 5 - 9 slightly branched, bright green veins. Spadeleaf (*Centella asiatica*) leaves have toothed margins, hairy undersurfaces, and short leafstalks.

Carolina grass-of-parnassus ***Parnassia caroliniana***

Related Rare Species: Carolina grass-of-parnassus is closely related to, and easily mistaken for, large-leaved grass-of-parnassus (*Parnassia grandifolia*), state-endangered. They can be differentiated by the flower. Carolina grass-of-parnassus has a green ovary while large-leaved grass-of-parnassus has a white ovary. Other easily identifiable differences are the number of parallel veins of each petal, Carolina grass-of-parnassus has 11-17 (counted at the midpoint, ignoring short laterals) and large-leafed grass-of-parnassus has 5-9.

Habitat: Open, grassy seepage slopes and wet prairies; edges of cypress strands and white cedar swamps along streams in north-central FL.

Best Survey Season: Flowering: fall; leaves are distinctive throughout the growing season.

Range-wide Distribution: FL Panhandle, NC, SC.

Conservation Status: Most known occurrences are protected within the Apalachicola National Forest

Protection and Management: Burn every 2 - 3 years, allowing fire to burn into edges of wetlands. Avoid ditching, draining, bedding, soil compaction, rutting, or other soil and hydrology impacts.

References: Coile 2000, Godfrey and Wooten 1981, Smith 1991, Wunderlin and Hansen 2011, Wunderlin et al. 2018, Weakley et al 2022.

Leaf blade ovate, longer than wide. Photo by Robert Gundy.