

LESSER CLEARWEED

Pilea fontana (Lunell) Rydb.

Synonyms: none

Family: Urticaceae (nettle)

FNAI Ranks: G5?/SH

Legal Status: US-none; FL-none



Blackfruit clearweed. Photo taken by Gary Fleming.

Field Description: **Herbs**, annual, 0.1 - 0.7 m. **Stems** simple or slightly branched, erect. **Leaf** blades elliptic to ovate, paired blades equal, 1 - 10 by 0.6 - 4.5 cm, margins dentate. **Inflorescences** crowded or lax. **Flowers** ca. 1 mm across. **Achenes** uniformly black except for very narrow, pale, often inconspicuous, marginal band, compressed, teardrop-shaped, 1.3 - 1.7 by 1 - 1.5 mm, conspicuously pebbled or warty with raised bosses.

Similar Species: Lesser clearweed (*Pilea fontana*) is only reliably differentiated from green fruit clearweed (*Pilea pumila*) using fruits: lesser clearweed achenes are pebbled, dark brown, dark purple, or black; green fruit clearweed achenes are smooth, green, or light brown.

Related Rare Species: In Florida there are not any related rare species.

lesser clearweed

Pilea fontana

Habitat: Swamp forest, freshwater marshes, tidal marshes, calcareous wetlands, sand bars (Weakley 2023).

Best Survey Season: Fruiting August - September.

Range-wide Distribution: E. Canada west to MN and ND, south to FL, IN, and NE; disjunct in n. AL (Weakley 2023)

Conservation Status: Possibly threatened by invasive species encroachment. Grows along swamp forest, freshwater marshes, tidal marshes, calcareous wetlands, sand bars (Weakley 2023). As of 2024, only two occurrence have been recorded on conservation land at Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park (1962), and Devil's Millhopper Geological State Park (1932). In order to understand the range of lesser clearweed (*Pilea fontana*) an inventory of north FL swamp forest, freshwater marshes, tidal marshes, calcareous wetlands is necessary.

Protection and Management: In order to understand the distribution of lesser clearweed (*Pilea fontana*) an inventory of north FL swamp forest, freshwater marshes, tidal marshes, calcareous wetlands is necessary.

References: Flora of North America (FNA) 2023, Weakley 2023.



Closeup of blackfruit clearweed fruits. Photo taken by Gary Fleming.