

## ZIGZAG SILKGRASS

*Pityopsis flexuosa* (Nash) Small

**Synonyms:** none

**Family:** Asteraceae (composite)

**FNAI Ranks:** G3/S3

**Legal Status:** US-none FL-Endangered

**Wetland Status:** US-none+ FL-UPL



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**Field Description:** Perennial herb 12 -20 inches tall with 1 - 6 zigzagging stems. Leaves are linear, 1.5 -2 inches long, and gradually become shorter and narrower toward the stem apex. Flower heads are yellow, 1 inch across, with 9 - 13 ray florets.

**Similar Species:** The small yellow flower heads of the closely related *Chrysopsis* spp. and *Heterotheca subaxillaris* look similar to zigzag silkgrass, but lack the zigzagging stem and linear leaves. Zigzag silkgrass can be distinguished from pineland silkgrass (*Pityopsis aspera*) and grassleaf goldenaster (*Pityopsis oligantha*) by having basal leaves shorter than the cauline leaves. Narrowleaf silkgrass (*Pityopsis graminifolia*) lacks the zigzagging stem and has an involucre (series of bracts surrounding the inflorescence) shorter than the pappus (modified calyx surrounding the petals), while zigzag silkgrass has an involucre equaling the pappus.

**Related Rare Species:** No other silkgrasses native to Florida are considered rare.

## zigzag silkgrass

*Pityopsis flexuosa*

Other rare aster family species in the FL Panhandle sandhills include Gholson's blazing star (*Liatris gholsonii*) and Godfrey's blazing star (*Liatris provincialis*).

**Habitat:** Sandhills, open pine-oak woods, and sandy clearings.

**Best Survey Season:** Fall; September through late November.

**Range-wide Distribution:** Endemic to the Florida Panhandle. Restricted to 5 counties. Majority of populations reported in Leon and Wakulla counties.

**Conservation Status:** Zigzag silkgrass has a very limited range in the sandhills of the Central Florida Panhandle. Urban development and intensive forestry management are major threats to this species.

**Protection and Management:** Prescribed fires are needed to reduce shrubby competition for this species, as it is often found growing in gaps with at least 70% open sky at ground level.

**References:** FNA 2006b, Gowe and Brewer 2005, Hammer 2018, Wunderlin and Hansen 2011.