

MISSISSIPPI BUTTERCUP

Ranunculus laxicaulis (Torr. & Gray) Darby

Synonyms: none

Family: Ranunculaceae (buttercup)

FNAI Ranks: G5?/S1

Legal Status: US-none; FL-Endangered



Petals 2 - 6 mm long. Photo © Richard Abbott Jr.

Field Description: **Herb** with small **achenes** (0.8 - 1.0 mm long) and the ovate to lanceolate lower stem leaves that are 4 - 24 mm wide and 1.0 - 6.5 cm long. **Stems** erect or ascending, often rooting at proximal nodes, glabrous or sparsely pilose. **Roots** not thickened basally, glabrous. Proximal cauline leaf blades ovate to lanceolate or narrowly elliptic, 1.5 - 6.5 by 0.4 - 2.4 cm, base cordate to acute, margins finely denticulate or entire, apex broadly rounded to acuminate. Inflorescences: bracts linear to lanceolate or oblanceolate. **Flowers** with a glabrous receptacle, sepals 4 - 5, spreading or reflexed from base, 2 - 3 by 1.5 - 3.0 mm, glabrous or pubescent; petals 4 - 6, 2 - 6 by 1 - 2 mm; nectary scales glabrous. Heads of **achenes** hemispheric to ovoid, 2 - 4 by 2 - 3 mm; **achenes** 0.8 - 1.0 by 0.8 mm, glabrous; beak deciduous, leaving stump 0.1 - 0.2 mm.

Similar Species: There is only one other buttercup (*Ranunculus* sp.) species in Florida with simple leaves: low spearwort (*Ranunculus pusillus*). It can be differentiated from Mississippi buttercup by the number of petals. Mississippi buttercup has 5 - 9 while low spearwort has 1 - 3.

Mississippi buttercup

Ranunculus laxicaulis

Related Rare Species: There are no other closely related rare species in Florida.

Habitat: Marshes, swamps, tidal cypress swamps.

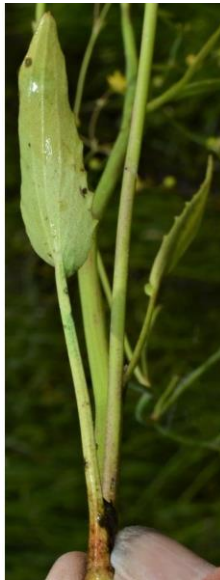
Best Survey Season: April - September

Range-wide Distribution: DE south to southwestern GA, Panhandle FL, west to eastern TX, inland in the interior to western TN, southern IN, southern IL, MO, and KS, almost entirely on the southeastern Coastal Plain.

Conservation Status: Mississippi buttercup is only known from one roadside location in Florida. This site is unprotected and vulnerable to impacts from road maintenance.

Protection and Management: If possible, acquire the land where the species occurs and protect it from potential negative impacts from clearing, invasive plant species, and forestry practices.

References: L. Anderson, pers.comm., 2021, Weakley, A. S. and the Southeastern Flora Team 2024, Wunderlin and Hansen 2011.



Lower stem leaves lanceolate, 4 - 24 mm wide. Photo © Richard Abbott Jr.