

## FLORIDA TORREYA

*Torreya taxifolia* Arn.

**Synonyms:** *Tumion taxifolium* (Arn.) Greene

**Family:** Taxaceae (yew)

**FNAI Ranks:** G1/S1

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



FNAI

**Field Description:** Evergreen **tree** with whorled branches, formerly to 18 m tall, now seen in the wild only as low sprouts of trees top-killed by a lethal fungus. **Needles** 2.5 - 3.8 cm long, flat, stiff, and sharply pointed; bright green above and light green below with two gray stripes paralleling the midvein; needles twisted and held in one plane on both sides of the twig. Both **twigs and needles** emit a foul odor when crushed. **Male and female cones** are on separate plants, but are now rarely seen in the wild because mature trees are killed by fungal blight.

**Similar Species:** No other native tree or shrub in the FL Panhandle has stiff, sharp, evergreen needles. Florida yew (*Taxus floridana*), state-endangered and included in this guide, has needles with pale stripes below but the needles are soft to the touch and aromatic when crushed.

**Related Rare Species:** No other native tree or shrub in the FL Panhandle has stiff, sharp, evergreen needles. Florida yew (*Taxus floridana*), state-endangered and included in this guide, has needles with pale stripes below but the needles are soft to the touch and aromatic when crushed.

**Habitat:** Rich, deciduous forests on mid-slopes of ravines and steepheads along the east side of the Apalachicola River.

**Best Survey Season:** Spring; best to survey in winter when leaves are off deciduous trees in this habitat.

**Range-wide Distribution:** Endemic to Apalachicola River valley in FL and one adjacent county in southwest GA.

**Conservation Status:** This narrowly endemic species is nearly extinct due to fungal blight and destruction of habitat. Several populations occur on Torreya State Park and a TNC preserve but they are vulnerable to blight.

**Protection and Management:** Continue monitoring wild and cultivated populations. Avoid logging and disturbances in slope forests. Purchase or protect with conservation easements all remaining populations on private lands. Fund research into a cure for the fungal blight.

**References:** Coile 2000, Godfrey 1988, Patrick et al. 1995, Schwartz and Hermann 1993a and 1993b, USFWS 1986a, Ward 1979, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000b.

