

## LONGSPIKE TRIDENS

*Tridens strictus* (Nutt.) Nash

**Synonyms:** none

**Family:** Poaceae (grass)

**FNAI Ranks:** G5/S2S3

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



Longspike tridens leaves © Aiden Campos

**Field Description:** Perennial **grass** with hard, knotty, shortly rhizomatous bases. **Culms** 50 - 170 cm, stiffly erect. **Sheaths** rounded, glabrous except for a few hairs on either side of the collar; ligules about 0.5 mm, membranous, ciliate; blades 2 - 8 mm wide, flat or loosely infolded, glabrous, tapering to the apices. **Panicles** 10 - 30 (36) cm long, 1 - 2 cm wide; branches to 6 cm, erect or appressed; pedicels 1 - 1.5 mm, glabrous. **Spikelets** 4 - 7 mm, with 5 - 11 florets. **Glumes** 4 - 7 mm, always conspicuously exceeding and often twice as long as the adjacent lemmas, usually equaling or exceeding the distal florets, glabrous, 1-veined, tapering to acuminate apices; calluses pilose; lemmas (2) 3 - 3.5 mm, veins pilose to well above midlength, lateral veins often excurrent; paleas 2 - 3 mm, bases not bowed-out; anthers 1 - 1.5 mm. **Caryopses** 1 - 1.5 mm. **2n** = 40.

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**Similar Species:** There are five species of triodia (*Tridens*) in Florida, including longspike tridens. Both longspike tridens and Carolina fluffgrass (*Tridens carolinianus*) have a dense and spike-like panicle with ascending to appressed branches, whereas pinebarren fluffgrass (*Tridens ambiguus*), Chapman's triodia (*Tridens chapmanii*), and tall redtop (*Tridens flavus*) have an open and spreading panicle with branches well-developed and spreading-ascending to reflexed. Plants of longspike tridens are caespitose with spikelets 4 - 6 mm long, whereas plants of Carolina fluffgrass originate from elongate rhizomes with spikelets 7 - 9 mm long.

**Related Rare Species:** There is one other rare triodia (*Tridens*) in Florida, Carolina triodia (*Tridens carolinianus*). Longspike tridens can be differentiated from other native triodia by the plants having a dense and spike-like panicle and overall being caespitose with spikelets 4 - 6 mm long.

**Habitat:** Longleaf pine sandhills, moist pine savannas, mesic to wet soils around swamps and marshes, roadsides.

**Best Survey Season:** Flowering August - November.

**Range-wide Distribution:** Southern VA south to AL, west to TX, north in the interior to IL and KS. Rhoads & Klein (1993) report an old specimen from western PA, presumably a waif.

**Conservation Status:** Longspike tridens can be found in northern Florida in Alachua, Jackson, Leon, and Nassau counties. Longspike tridens is only known from four occurrences (as of January 2025), three of which are protected on Conservation Lands. This species grows along roadsides and powerline right-of-ways and is potentially threatened by maintenance activities such as mowing and herbicide use.

**Protection and Management:** Refrain from roadside maintenance practices, such as herbiciding and mowing, in areas where longspike tridens populations are known.

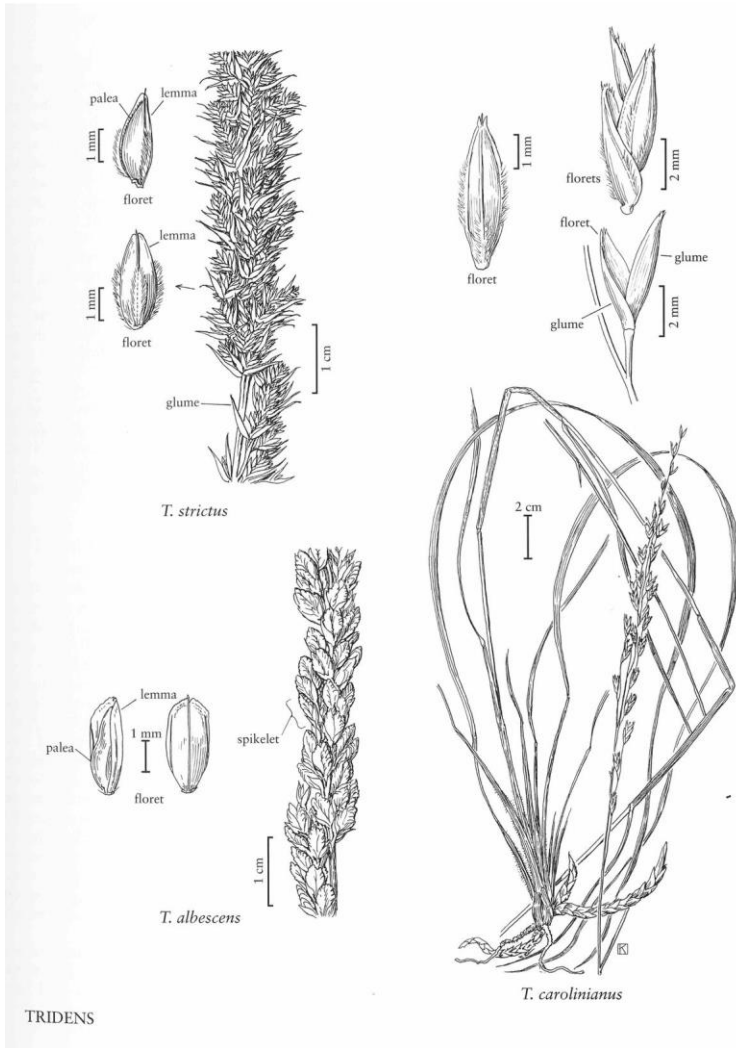
**References:** FNA 2003, Rhoads and Klein 1993, Weakley, A. S. and the Southeastern Flora Team 2024, Wunderlin et al. 2018.

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Longspike tridens © Aiden Campos



TRIDENS