



Common Name: WIRE-LEAF DROPSEED

Scientific Name: *Sporobolus teretifolius* Harper

Other Commonly Used Names: none

Previously Used Scientific Names: none

Family: Poaceae/Gramineae (grass)

Rarity Ranks: G2?/S2?

State Legal Status: Special Concern

Federal Legal Status: none

Federal Wetland Status: FACW

Description: Perennial **grass**, growing in small tufts, often forming large patches. **Leaf blade** 10 - 21 inches (25 - 54 cm) long, wiry, oval in cross-section, often grooved for portions of the

length of the leaf, hairless or with only a few, scattered hairs near the base; leaf margins smooth; turning tan in the fall. **Leaf sheath** clasping the base of the stalk, shiny and hardened at the base, may be hairy or smooth. **Flowering stalk** 8 - 40 inches (20 - 100 cm) tall (including the flower cluster), wiry, hairless. **Flower cluster** 4 - 10 inches (10 - 26 cm) long, open with numerous widely spaced branches, oval or pyramidal in overall shape. **Flowers** composed of several tiny, overlapping, scale-like bracts at the tips of delicate, spreading branches; **fruits** never observed.

Similar Species: Two other grasses in wet savannas and flatwoods have wiry leaves. Wiregrass (*Aristida stricta*, synonym: *A. beyrichiana*) has a patch of long or woolly hairs at the “collar” where the base of the leaf blade meets the leaf sheath. Savanna hairgrass (*Muhlenbergia expansa*) has curly, fibrous – not hardened – leaf bases. Curtiss’s dropseed (*S. curtissii*) has very narrow leaves, less than 1/8 inch wide, but they are flattened or V-shaped in cross-section, not wiry except when dried; the leaf blades are usually shorter than 8 inches; it occurs in moist but not wet flatwoods.

Related Rare Species: Pineland dropseed (*Sporobolus pinetorum*, Special Concern) has narrow, flattened leaves, somewhat V-shaped in cross-section; leaf margins have stiff, rough hairs; it occurs in wet or moist, wiregrass-dominated savannas and flatwoods in Liberty and Long Counties. Prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*, Special Concern) has narrow, flattened leaves with rough margins; it occurs in limestone cedar glades in Catoosa County and in the Coosa Prairies of Floyd County.

Habitat: Wet savannas with longleaf pine and wiregrass, seepage slopes, pitcherplant bogs, wet edges of streamside thickets.

Life History: Wireleaf dropseed is a warm season grass – its active growth and flowering takes place in the summer (but only if there was a spring or early summer burn), with seeds shed in the fall and germinating the following spring. Like all grasses, it is wind-pollinated. Its seeds are dispersed by insects and small mammals.

Survey Recommendations: Surveys are best conducted during flowering (August–September, following a fire).

Range: Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, and North Carolina.

Threats: Fire suppression, pine straw raking, use of herbicides, clearing and conversion of habitat to pine plantations and fields, disruption of natural hydrology.

Georgia Conservation Status: About 30 populations are known in 19 counties; fewer than 10 occur on conservation land.

Conservation and Management Recommendations: Apply prescribed fires every 2 - 3 years during the growing season. Avoid plowing fire lines, especially in streamside transition zones. Prevent pine straw raking and use of herbicides in longleaf pine habitats. Protect longleaf pine communities from clearing and logging. Avoid altering hydrology of seepage slopes and savannas.

Selected References:

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Date Compiled or Updated:

L. Chafin, Aug. 2008: original account

K. Owers, Feb. 2010: added pictures



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