



**Common Name:** THORNE'S BEAKSEEDGE

**Scientific Name:** *Rhynchospora thornei* Kral

**Other Commonly Used Names:** Thorne's beakrush

**Previously Used Scientific Names:** none

**Family:** Cyperaceae (sedge)

**Rarity Ranks:** G3/S2

**State Legal Status:** Special Concern

**Federal Legal Status:** none

**Federal Wetland Status:** none

**Description:** Perennial, grass-like **herb** forming dense clumps from lateral offshoots and mats from underground stems. **Stems** 4 - 8 inches (10 - 20 cm) tall, wiry, and flexible. **Leaves** up to 5 inches (13 cm) long, often much shorter, very narrow and wiry. **Flower cluster** usually at the top of the stem; 1 - 2 other clusters may be widely spaced along the stem; each cluster has 1 - 3 narrow, pointed spikelets. **Spikelets** less than  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch (2.5 - 3 mm) long, with brown scales and 2 oval, pale brown, seed-like fruits. **Fruit** less than  $\frac{1}{16}$  inch (1 mm) long, including the pointed tip, yellowish with a patterned surface; 2 - 6 very short, white, barbed bristles are attached to the

base of the fruit. Beaksedge species are difficult to identify; 10 - 20x magnification is needed to examine spikelets, fruits, and especially the bristles, which are otherwise undetectable.

**Similar Species:** Few-flowered beaksedge (*Rhynchospora rariflora*) has fruits longer than  $\frac{1}{16}$  inch (1.8 - 2 mm). Two similar beaksedges (*R. divergens* and *R. pusilla*) may occur with Thorne's beaksedge; they lack underground stems, their spikelets contain 1 - 3 or more fruits, and their fruits lack bristles (Thorne's beaksedge bristles are very difficult to see).

**Related Rare Species:** At least 15 species of beaksedge are rare in Georgia. See Georgia beaksedge (*Rhynchospora culixa*), bearded beaksedge (*R. crinipes*), pineland beaksedge (*R. punctata*), solitary beaksedge (*R. solitaria*), and coastal beaksedge (*R. pleiantha*) elsewhere on this website.

**Habitat:** Edges of limesink ponds, wet seeps over calcium-rich rock, openings and stream edges in wet to moist prairies; ditches and rights-of-way through these habitats. Often occurs with narrow-leaf white-topped sedge (*Rhynchospora colorata*).

**Life History:** Thorne's beaksedge is a perennial herb that reproduces sexually as well as vegetatively by producing rhizomes and lateral offshoots at the base of the plant. All beaksedge flowers are wind-pollinated; their fruits are dispersed by water and gravity, and also by animals, assisted by the tiny, barbed bristles at the base of the fruit which attach to fur and feathers.

**Survey Recommendations:** Surveys are best conducted during fruiting (June–October). Mature fruits are needed for identification.

**Range:** Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and North Carolina. Fewer than 35 populations are known throughout its range.

**Threats:** Conversion of wetland habitat to pine plantations, agriculture, and development; fire suppression; drying of ponds due to lowering of groundwater table, disturbances to streamside zones, use of herbicides in roadside rights-of-way.

**Georgia Conservation Status:** Seven populations are currently known, 2 on conservation land.

**Conservation and Management Recommendations:** Protect isolated wetlands and small streams from filling, pollution, and off-road-vehicle access. Apply prescribed fire every 2 - 3 years in adjacent uplands, allowing fire to burn into ponds and stream edges. Avoid herbicide use in rights-of-way and schedule mowing after fruiting.

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