



Common Name: HARPER'S FIMBRY

Scientific Name: *Fimbristylis perpusilla* Harper ex Small & Britton

Other Commonly Used Names: Harper's fimbristylis, dwarf fimbry

Previously Used Scientific Names: none

Family: Cyperaceae (sedge)

Rarity Ranks: G2/S1

State Legal Status: Endangered

Federal Legal Status: none

Federal Wetland Status: OBL

Description: Annual, grass-like **herb**, 2 - 3 inches tall, growing in small clumps. **Leaves** 1 - 3 inches (2.5 - 8 cm) long, very narrow (0.5 mm wide), spreading or arching upward. **Flower stalks** wiry, usually longer than the leaves. **Flower cluster** at the tip of the stalk, with a green, leaf-like **bract**, $\frac{3}{8}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ inches (1-2 cm) long, extending beyond the flower spikes. **Flower spike** about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (2 - 4 mm) long, oval, greenish-brown, composed of many small, sharp-pointed scales that conceal flowers and fruits; **flowers** are bisexual. **Fruit** tiny, pitted, seed-like, banana-shaped (10x magnification is required to see features of the spikes and fruits).

Similar Species: Harper's fimbry is much smaller than other fimbry species except for Vahl's fimbry (*Fimbristylis vahlii*), which has oval fruits and a bract up to 4 inches (4 - 10 cm) long beneath the flower spike. Small spikerushes (*Eleocharis* spp.) are similar but lack true leaves and have only one tiny, cone-like spike at the tips of their thread-like stems.

Related Rare Species: See flatrock fimbry (*Fimbristylis brevivaginata*, Special Concern) on this website.

Habitat: Muddy shores and exposed bottoms of limesink, flatwoods, and farm ponds, silty sandbars in blackwater rivers, dried-up backwater sloughs.

Life History: Harper's fimbry is an annual whose seeds can remain dormant for years until a dry year produces the muddy pond edges that it inhabits. The small flowers of Harper's fimbry are wind-pollinated; seeds are probably dispersed by waterfowl and small animals.

Survey Recommendations: Surveys are best conducted during fruiting (September–October) because mature fruits are needed for identification. Plants may not be visible at a pond for years, then will re-appear when seasonal water fluctuations are favorable.

Range: Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware.

Threats: Destruction of ponds by draining, filling, and cattle trampling. Fire suppression.

Georgia Conservation Status: Four populations are known, 2 on conservation lands.

Conservation and Management Recommendations: Avoid draining or filling natural ponds. Allow fires in surrounding uplands to burn across ponds. Avoid plowing fire lines or cutting roads around ponds. Exclude cattle from natural ponds.

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