



Common Name: COASTAL BEAKSEDGE

Scientific Name: *Rhynchospora pleiantha* (Kukenthal) Gale

Other Commonly Used Names: coastal beakrush

Previously Used Scientific Names: *Rhynchospora filifolia* A. Gray var. *pleiantha* Kukenthal

Family: Cyperaceae (sedge)

Rarity Ranks: G3/SH

State Legal Status: Special Concern

Federal Legal Status: none

Federal Wetland Status: none

Description: Perennial, grass-like **herb**, forming dense clumps. **Stems** 4 - 21 inches tall (10 - 53 cm), but usually less than 1 foot (30 cm), thin and wiry. **Leaves** much shorter than the stem, thread-like, often curling. **Flower clusters** 5 or fewer per stem; each cluster contains several narrow, pointed spikelets and is overtopped by a long, wiry bract. **Spikelets** about ¼ inch (5 - 7 mm) long, covered with reddish-brown scales and containing 2 - 5 seed-like fruits. **Fruit** less than ⅛ inch (3 mm) long including the pointed tip and tiny, hairy stalk; oval, glossy brown with a pale, opaque center; 6 barbed bristles are attached to the base of the fruit. Beaksedge species are difficult to identify in the field; 10x or higher magnification is needed to examine the fruits.

Similar Species: Thread-leaved beaksedge (*Rhynchospora filifolia*) stem is usually taller, 12 - 39 inches (30 - 100 cm) tall; its spikelets are about ⅛ inch (2.5 - 4 mm) long, and its fruit has a pale, translucent center (see drawing, lower right).

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 Thorne's beaksedge (*R. thornei*) on this website.

Habitat: Margins of limesink depression ponds, usually in shallow water or at the lower edges of shorelines.

Life History: Coastal beaksedge is a perennial herb that reproduces sexually as well as vegetatively by forming clumps from lateral offshoots and by the spread of many slender, scaly rhizomes. 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 (late spring–fall). Mature fruits are required for identification.

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

Threats: Fire suppression, trampling by live stock, lowering of groundwater table by withdrawal for agriculture and urban uses.

Georgia Conservation Status: One population was recently observed on conservation land; the other has not been seen since the early 1900s.

Conservation and Management Recommendations: Apply prescribed fire every 2 - 3 years during the growing season, allowing fire to burn into pond edges. Avoid placing firebreaks and roads around ponds. Exclude cattle and off-road-vehicles from natural ponds. Prevent permanent drying of ponds by regulating withdrawal from the aquifer.

Selected References:

Chafin, L.G. 2007. Field guide to the rare plants of Georgia. State Botanical Garden of Georgia and University of Georgia Press, Athens.

FNA. 2003. Flora of North America, Vol. 23, Magnoliophyta: Commelinidae (in part), Cyperaceae (part 1). Oxford University Press, New York.

Gale, S. 1944. *Rhynchospora*, section Eurhynchospora, in Canada, the United States, and the West Indies. *Rhodora* 46(2): 169-175.

Godfrey, R.K. and J.W. Wooten. 1979. Aquatic and wetland plants of southeastern United States, Vol. 1, monocotyledons. University of Georgia Press, Athens.

Kral, R. 1996. Supplemental notes on *Rhynchospora crinipes* and related species in Section Fuscae (Cyperaceae). *Sida* 17(2): 385-411.

NatureServe. 2008. NatureServe Explorer. Arlington, Virginia.
<http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>

Weakley, A.S. 2008. Flora of the Carolinas, Virginia, Georgia, northern Florida, and surrounding areas. University of North Carolina Herbarium, Chapel Hill.
<http://www.herbarium.unc.edu/flora.htm>

Author of Species Account: Linda G. Chafin

Date Compiled or Updated:

L. Chafin, Aug. 2008: original account

K. Owers, Feb. 2010: added pictures



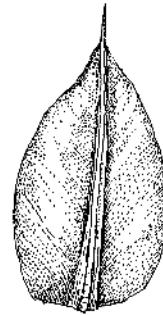


J.C. Putnam H.

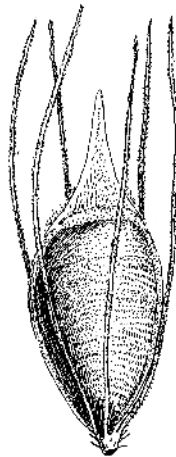
COASTAL BEAKSEDGE
Rhynchospora pleiantha



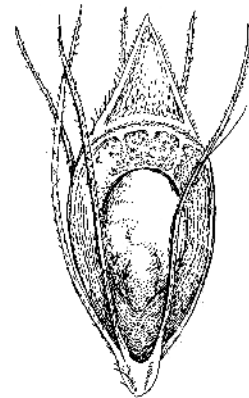
spikelet



scale



fruit of coastal
beaksedge



fruit of thread-leaved
beaksedge