

Identifying the Genera of Central Florida Grasses Growing Wild

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Generously provided to the Central Florida CISMA

Simple, spiny spikes

Chasmanthium—wood oats
Shin to waist high
Not sharp, sometimes
has intermittent
lateral spikelets
Found in woodlands
and hammocks



Cenchrus—sand spur/sandbur
Ankle to just below knee-high
Sharp spines
Has no lateral spikelets
Found in disturbed xeric sand





Sorghastrum--Indiangrass
Tall bunchgrass flowers late September, seed drops mid-October—2 species in area

Various non-spiny, simple spikes

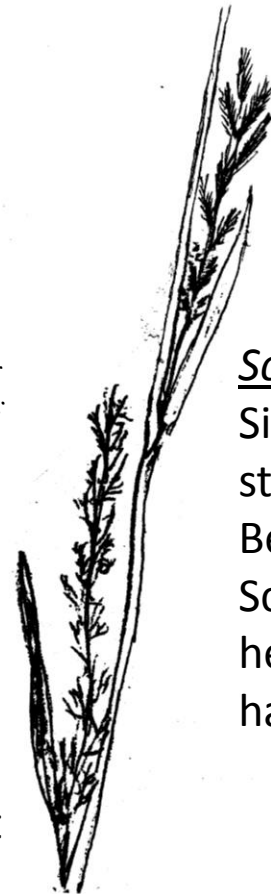
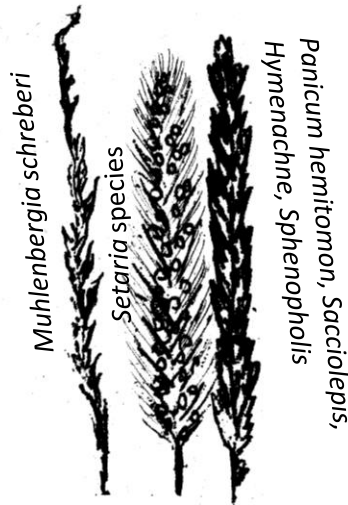
Imperata, cogongrass

Silky plume becomes cottony at maturity
Colonial grass occurs in thick patches
Leaves are basal, up to 6 feet long
Our worst grass weed



Silky, plume-like simple spike

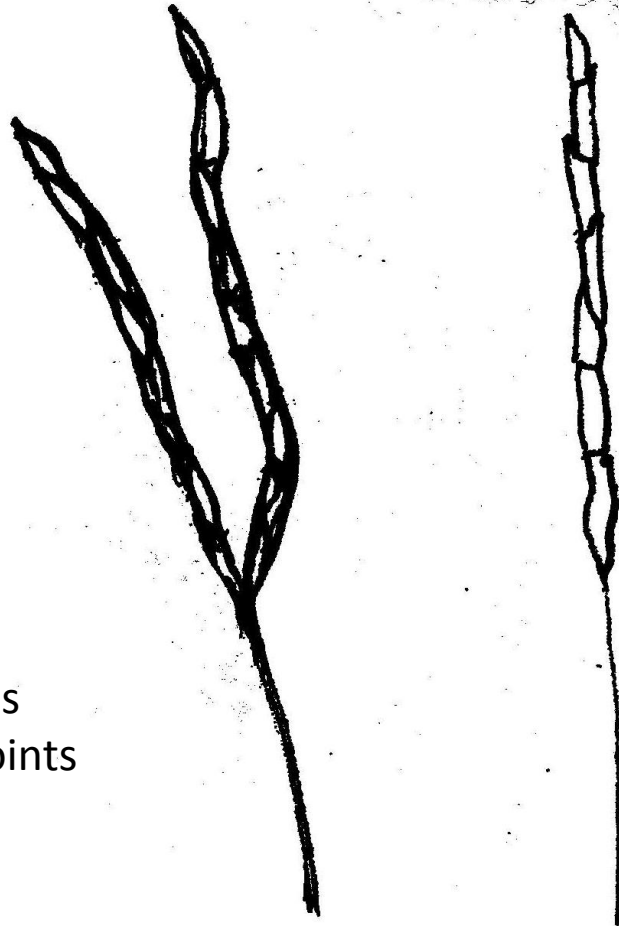
Eragrostis ciliaris
—gophertail lovegrass
Silky plume on knee high, bunchy grass with lots of leaves on stems
Multiple florets per spikelet
Annual of dry waste places



Schizachyrium, Elionurus

Single spike per lateral stem
Bearded florets
Schizachyrium is knee to head high in many habitats

Peg-like, jointed spikes



Coelorachis, Tripsacum

Two or more peg-joint spikes
from lateral and terminal points

Coelorachis (mostly
bunches in wet ground),
Hemarthria (colonial
patches in wet ground),
Tripsacum (bunchgrass),
Paspalidium (semi-aquatic),
Eremochloa (a short plant),
Rottboellia

Singular/forked/radiating spikes

Andropogon
(bluestem grasses)

Bunchgrasses in wet to xeric habitats

Bearded (fuzzy) lateral spikes with 2 or more forks joined per peduncle (shared stem)

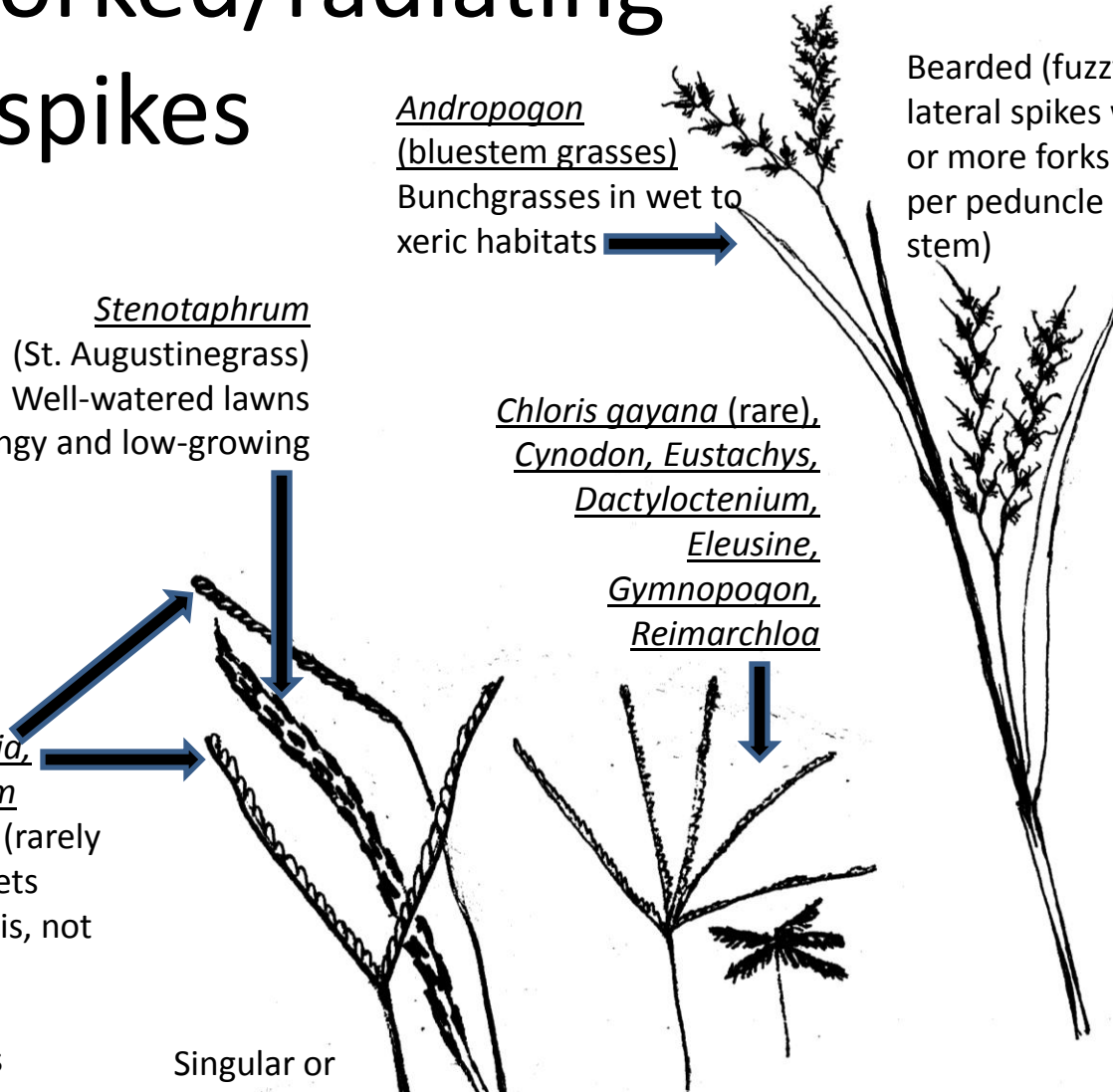
Stenotaphrum
(St. Augustinegrass)
Well-watered lawns
Thick, spongy and low-growing

Chloris gayana (rare),
Cynodon, Eustachys,
Dactyloctenium,
Eleusine,
Gymnopogon,
Reimarchloa

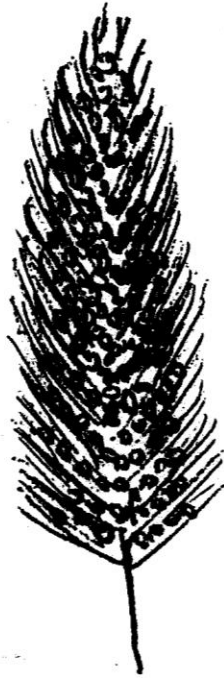
Axonopus, Digitaria,
Eleusine, Paspalum
Singular or forked (rarely 3 spikes) with florets attached to a rachis, not two-ranked like in Digitaria
Variety of habitats

Singular or simple-forked spikes
Attached to a rachis, no bearding on florets

3 or more forks, florets attached to rachis (not two-ranked like Digitaria, no beards on florets)



Granular spikes



Polypogon, Setaria
Awned and granular
terminal spike like foxtail
or rabbit foot



Sporobolus, Dichanthelium
Granular spikes, awns not
evident

Various comb-like spikes

Bouteloua hirsuta

—hairy gramma grass

Short grass in xeric habitat

Ctenium—toothache grass

Waist high or higher in wetter habitat

Dactyloctenium

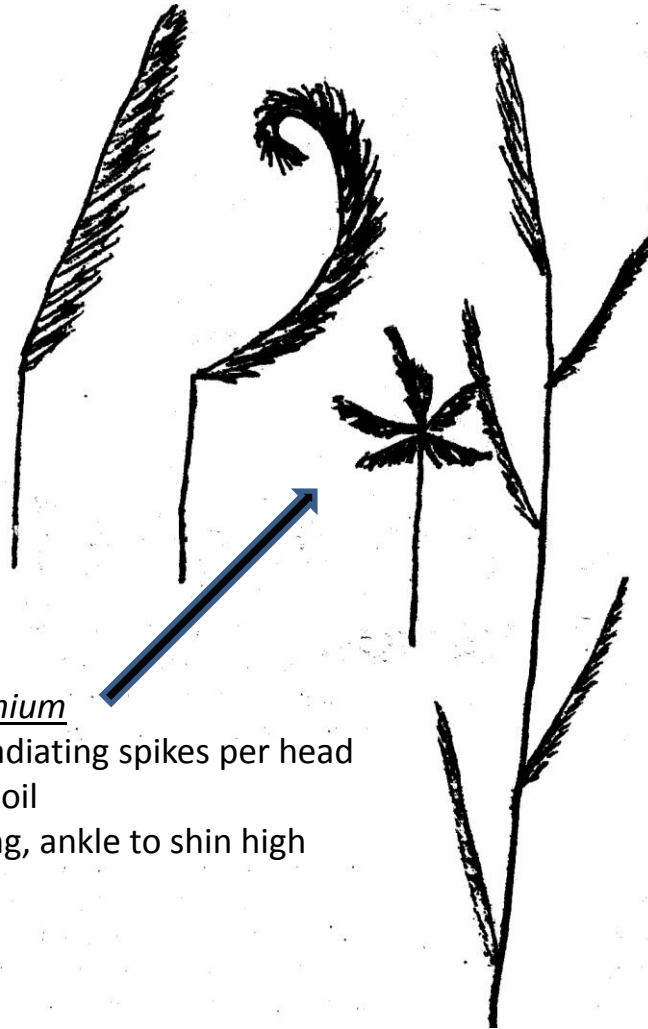
Multiple, radiating spikes per head

Disturbed soil

Low growing, ankle to shin high

Spartina—cordgrass

Tall bunchgrass in wet ground
and landscaping, from thigh
high up to chest high



Tall grasses with silky or plume-like spikes

Arundo, Saccharum, Phragmites

Saccharum—plumegrass

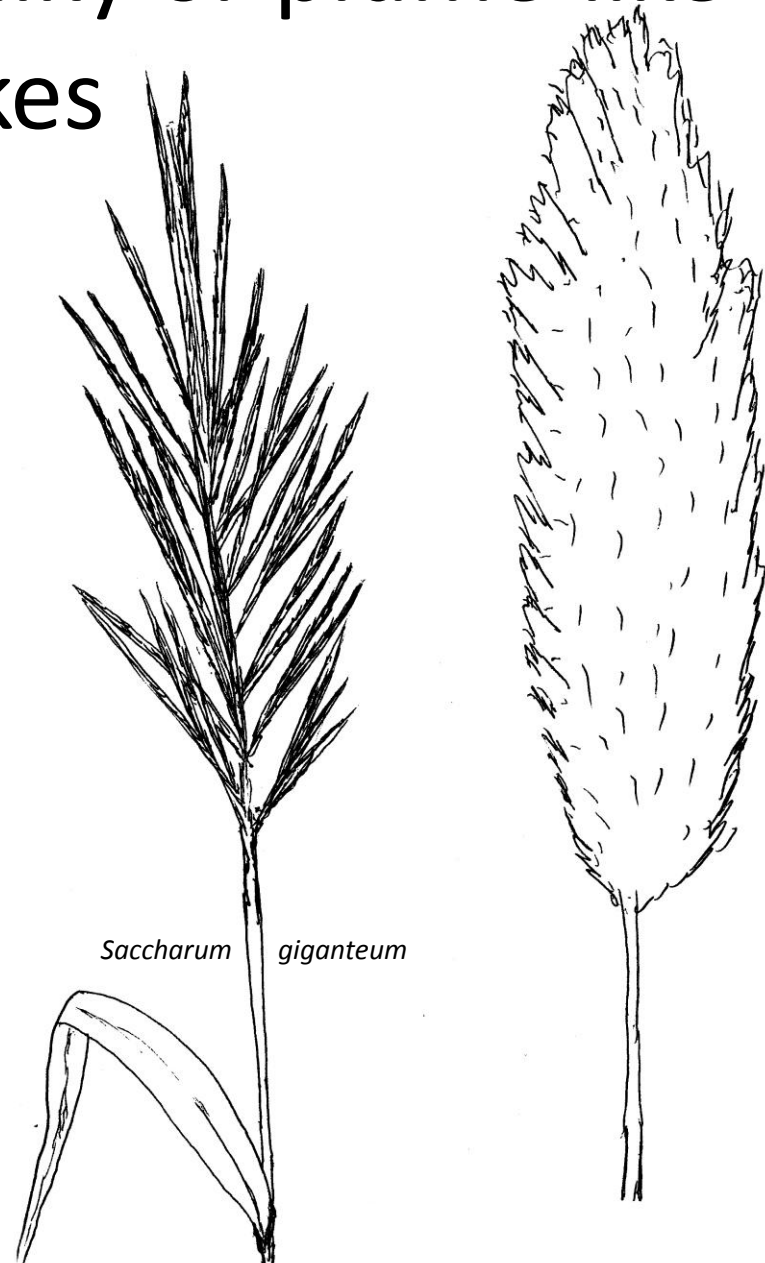
Chest high or higher in wetter habitat,
usually over head high in flower and seed
Sometimes very hairy, sometimes nearly
hair-free
Bunch-forming

Arundo donax—giant reed

Colony-forming, very broad leaves, in waste
places and biofuel plantings

Phragmites—common reed

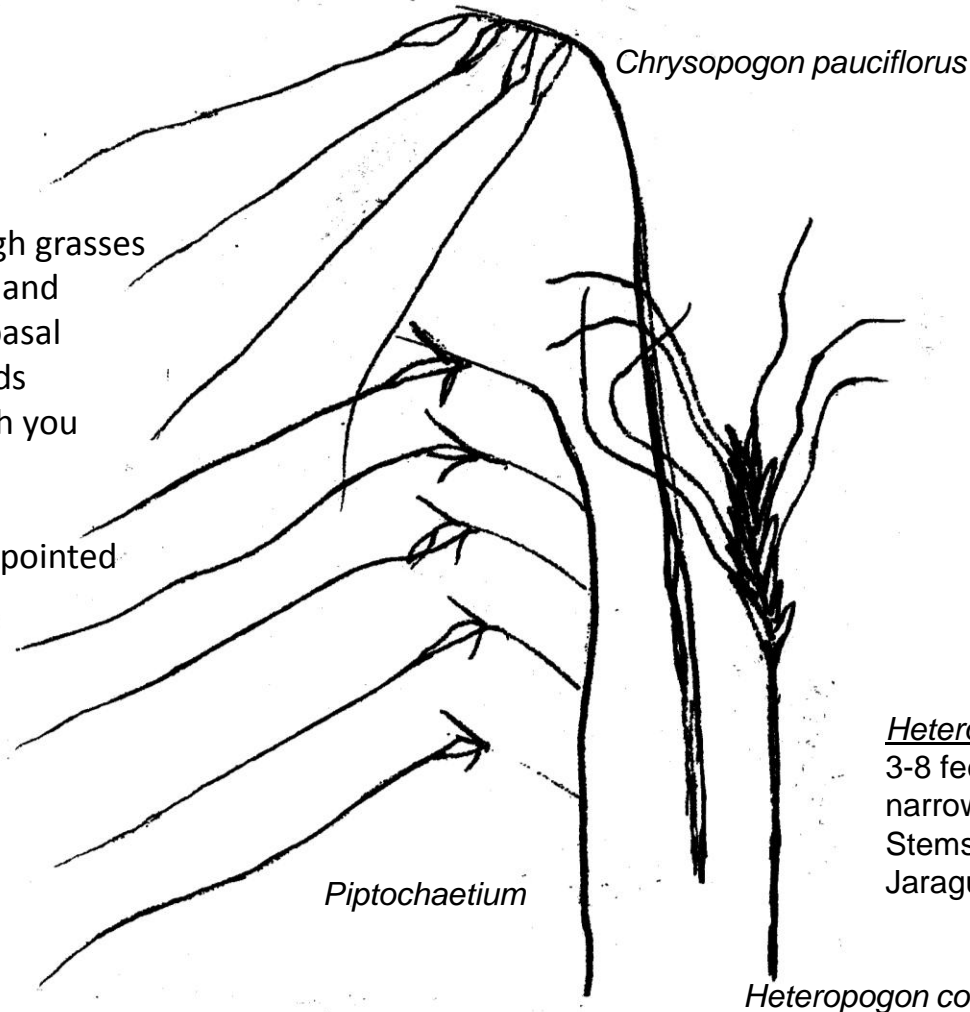
In wetlands of varying conditions; as of
2010 no known non-native invasive strains
in FL natural areas; very broad leaves



Single, long awns

Chrysopogon, Piptochaetium

Knee to waist high grasses
Leaf blades long and narrow, mostly basal
Long awned seeds appear as though you could sew with them
Seeds are sharp-pointed at the base



Hyparrhenia rufa—Jaraguagrass
Very tall grass (shoulder high to taller) found in rangeland plantings and in disturbed areas; can invade disturbed natural areas
Leafy plants form bunches, but can grow thick enough to look colonial
Stems thick
Flower spikes similar to *Heteropogon contortus* (shown)

Heteropogon contortus—tanglehead
3-8 feet tall, leaf blades much narrower than Jaraguagrass
Stems thin, not as leafy as Jaraguagrass

Three awns per floret, spikes simple-looking or a panicle

Aristida

Bunchgrasses

Wiregrass (*A. stricta*)—fire-managed lands from wet prairie flow-ways to sandhill in wetness

Bottlebrush threeawn (*A. spiciformis*)
—flowers in years of fire-absence

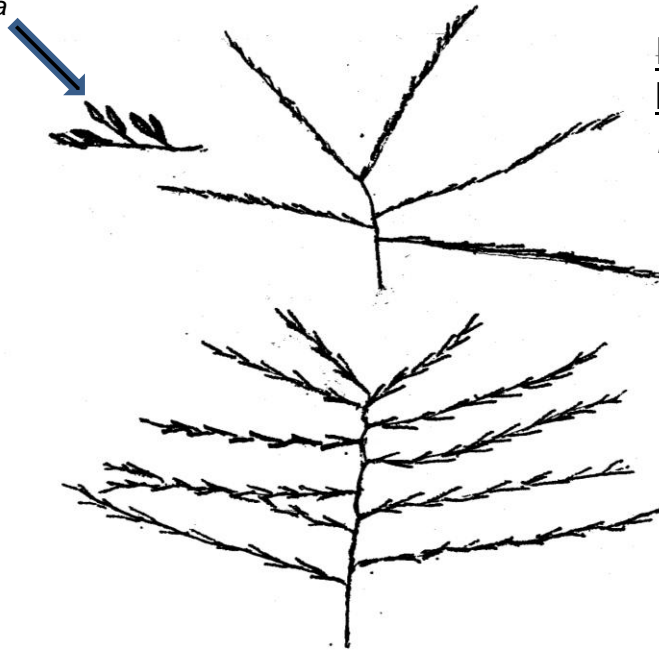
A. palustris, *purpurescens*, *patula*
found in wetter places

A. gyrans, *oligantha*, *rhizomophora*
more xeric ground

There are other *Aristidas* in the area as well



Detail of paired florets in spikelet branches on *Digitaria*



Paired pedunculate florets form spikelet branches on each lateral raceme
Digitaria

Many lateral racemes on a compressed principle rachis over a squat, spreading, bunchy plant
Gymnopogon

Lateral racemes from short principle rachis



Lateral raceme on a short principle rachis

Chloris gayana

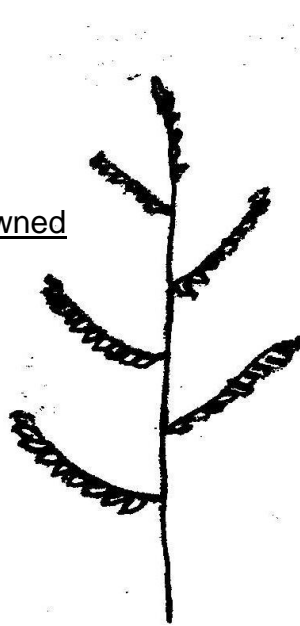
Cymbopogon

Eleusine (goosegrass)

Simple panicles

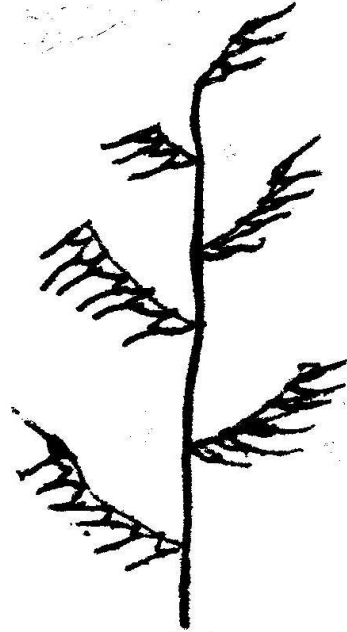
Florets not conspicuously awned

Cymbopogon
Eriochloa
Panicum
Paspalum



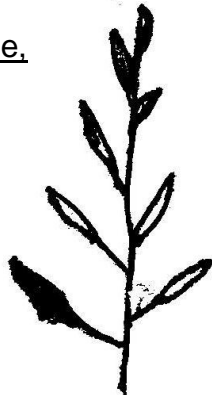
Florets conspicuously awned

Echinochloa
Oplismenus



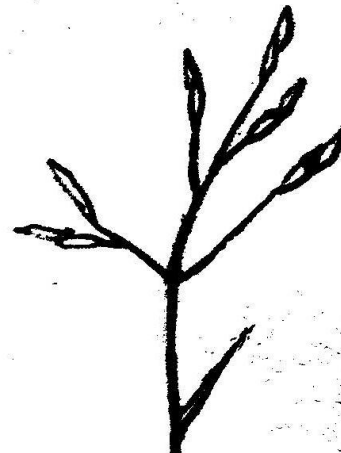
Simple panicle/loose raceme,
elongated florets

Amphicarpum
Leersia



Simple panicle, some
branching common

Triplasis



(Simple panicles, continued)

Sporobolus

Glumes >6 mm long
on panicle
with spikelets
of 1 floret

Agrostis

Glumes more or less
equal to grain in overall
Stature, glumes
under 6 mm



Simple or branched panicles with fuzzy florets

Rhynchelytrum repens (syn. *Melinis repens*)

Rose natalgrass

Some lower foliage tends to redden and turn
straw color before plant is fully mature
Bunching grass can node-root and creep
Florets turn from rose-red in flower to amber
to frosty whitish-hairy with amber undertones
as mature seed
Branching spreads close to 90 degrees

Anthaenantia

Looks like silk-hairy grains rather than
fuzzy and hidden as in
Rhynchelytrum...easy to make out granular
character of hairy florets in *Anthaenantia*
Branches form ascending, acute, rather
than spreading sub-perpendicular angles

Anthaenantia rubra



Anthaenantia villosa

Branched panicles

One floret per spikelet

With awns—

Muhlenbergia capillaris

Phanopyrum

Sorghum

Some *Sporobolus*

Zizaniopsis

Awnless—

Agrostis perennans

Dichantherium

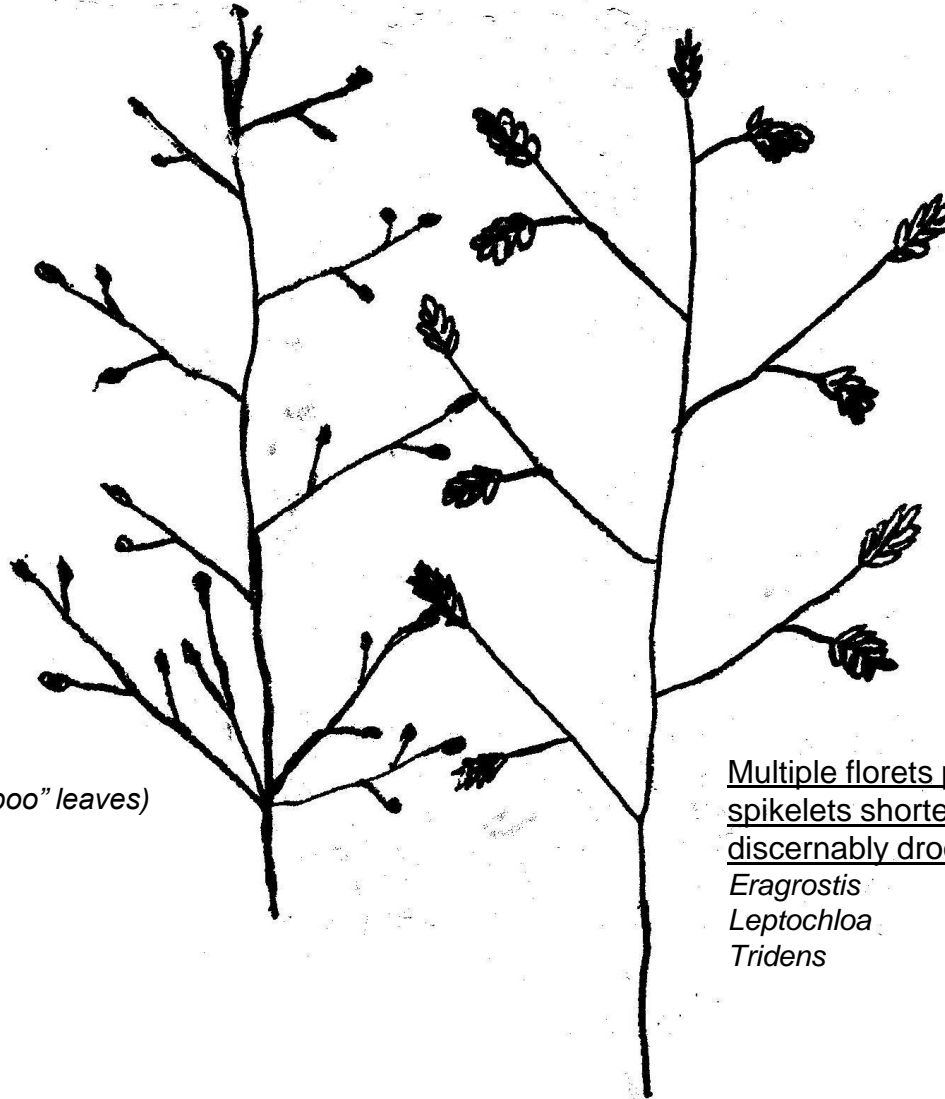
Leptochloa

Panicum

Pharus (super rare, has “bamboo” leaves)

Poa

Rhynchelytrum (fuzzy florets)



Multiple florets per spikelet;
spikelets shorter than 1 cm, not
discernably drooping on branches

Eragrostis

Leptochloa

Tridens

Simple or branched
panicle with multiple
florets per spikelet;
spikelets over 1 cm long,
drooping or dangling
habit

Bromus

Chasmanthium latifolium (out of range, but included)

Festuca

Leptochloa

Tridens



Bromus

Bamboo-like with clustered, broad leaves

Arundinaria

Upright, colony-forming grass waist high to twice your height or slightly more, found growing with other native plants in the northern half of FL

Bambusa

Can be as small as *Arundinaria*, but usually much larger and denser growing
Found where people have planted or tried to discard this plant, not usually in diverse native habitats away from disturbance

Pharus—extremely rare plant

Veins are pronounced on the top side of leaf rather than bottom

Open panicle
Not depicted, but leaves similar to below, left

Pharus is only known on a single mound site



Dichantherium scabriusculum
(syn. *Panicum scabriusculum*)

Woolly witchgrass
Clusters of leaves surround the flower panicles
Found in patches in wet prairies and pond edges
Plant stems can be from 2 feet to head high
Very leafy, stems are brittle when leaves turn tan

Dichantherium scabriusculum

Fuzzy spikes on upper quarter of plant, not Andropogon or simple terminal plumes

Cymbopogon citratus (lemongrass)

Fuzzy spikes on upper
quarter of plant
Spikes not uniformly
forked, rather they are
raceme-like clusters
Foliage, stems and
flowers all smell of
lemon oil when plant is
disturbed or crushed



Cymbopogon citratus



Bothriochloa

Bothriochloa

Fuzzy spikes are
terminal and lateral
Spikes not simply
forked or radiating,
but branched from
a principle rachis

Aquatic plant with staminate and pistillate flowers growing separately

Luziola

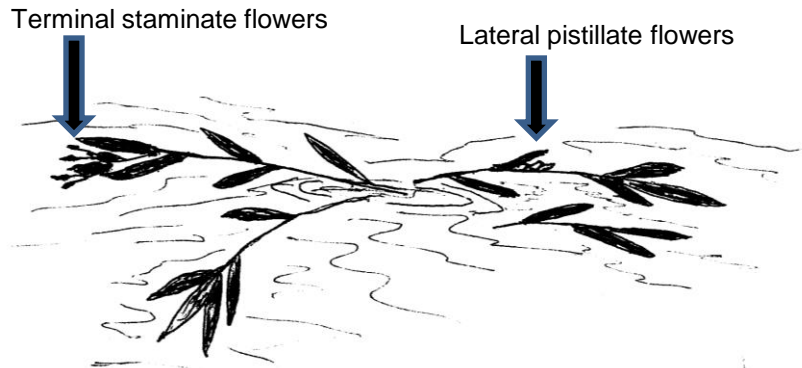
—watergrass

Forms mats on water, mud or sand surface

L. fluitans—small leaves, usually about 1-2 inches long

Very narrow stems, like wire

L. subintegra—larger leaves several inches long
swollen sheaths allow plants to float in open water
similar to *Paspalum repens* in general habit



Terminal staminate flowers



Lateral pistillate flowers



Zizania aquatica (wild rice)

Zizania aquatica

Aquatic

Tall, chest to over head
high

