

## FLORIDA TOOTHACHE GRASS

*Ctenium floridanum* (A.S. Hitchc.) A.S. Hitchc.

**Synonyms:** *Campulosus floridanus* Hitchc.

**Family:** Poaceae (grass)

**FNAI Ranks:** G2/S2

**Legal Status:** US-none FL-Endangered

**Wetland Status:** US-FACW+ FL-FACW



**Field Description:** Perennial **grass** with flowering **stalks** 1 - 5 feet tall, rising in a row from underground **stems (rhizomes)**. **Basal leaves** 2 - 12 inches long, bright green, with conspicuous, rough-hairy veins. **Stem leaves** few, scattered, inrolled, shorter than basal leaves. **Flowers (spikelets)** in a dense, one-sided, comb-like spike that curls and spirals as it dries. The 2nd glume (see drawing) with a slender, pointed bristle (awn); if a row of glands occurs on the 2nd glume, it is low and inconspicuous - usually glands are absent.

**Similar Species:** Common toothache grass (*Ctenium aromaticum*) grows in dense clumps in wet savannas and flatwoods; it has a conspicuous row of glands on the 2nd glume of the spikelet. The leaves of common toothache grass are two-toned: bright yellow-green above and waxy blue-green below. These two species of toothache grass are the only FL grass species with a comb-like spike at the tip of the flowering stem.

## Florida toothache grass

*Ctenium floridanum*

**Related Rare Species:** Fifteen grass species are listed as threatened or endangered in FL.

**Habitat:** Sandhills and other dry pinelands.

**Best Survey Season:** Spring-fall; dried, curling spikes visible through the winter.

**Range-wide Distribution:** Endemic to NE FL and adjacent SE GA.

**Conservation Status:** About 37 populations are known as of 2019, most of these in conservation areas.

**Protection and Management:** Burn sandhills and flatwoods every 2 - 3 years during the growing season. Avoid soil-disturbing activities such as bedding and plowing fire lanes. Preserve upland habitats through purchase and conservation easements.

**References:** Coile 2000, Hall 1978, Hitchcock and Chase 1950, Kral 1983, Wunderlin and Hansen 2011, Wunderlin et al. 2018.