

SCRUB BLUESTEM

Schizachyrium niveum (Swallen) Gould

Synonyms: *Andropogon niveus* Swallen

Family: Poaceae (grass)

FNAI Ranks: G1G2/S1S2

Legal Status: US-none FL-Endangered

Wetland Status: US-none+ FL-FAC



Jonas Miller

Field Description: Small, tufted **grass**. **Leaves** 2.5 - 4 inches long, hairless except for a few hairs at base, very narrow, flat, held horizontal to the stem. **Flowering stalk** erect, to 2.5 feet tall, loosely branched at the top with only 1 **inflorescence** at the tip of each branch; joints of the inflorescence covered with silvery-white hairs, contrasting with reddish-brown **flowering spikelets**.

Similar Species: The scrub bluestem can be distinguished from common bluestems, such as little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), broomsedge (*Andropogon virginicus*), and split-beard bluestem (*A. ternarius*) by overall appearance. It is smaller and has shorter leaves and more slender stems than the other bluestems in central FL scrub, which have 2 or more inflorescences at the ends of branches. Its leaves are held horizontal to the stem. It tends to occur in small patches of individual plants rather than in large clumps or swathes.

scrub bluestem

Schizachyrium niveum

Related Rare Species: Silky bluestem (*Schizachyrium sericatum*), state-endangered, occurs in pine rocklands in Monroe County Keys. It has narrow, inrolled leaves and densely branched inflorescences.

Habitat: White sand patches in rosemary scrub; also sand pine scrub and oak scrub.

Best Survey Season: Flowers and fruits September - November.

Range-wide Distribution: Endemic to peninsular Florida

Conservation Status: Reported from 9 counties during the last century, it is now known from only a few preserves, where it is rare. Habitat loss to development and citrus groves has been severe.

Protection and Management: Habitat loss to development and citrus groves has been severe. Use periodic fire to manage scrub and create openings. Exclude offroad-vehicles from scrub preserves. Purchase remaining unprotected fragments of scrub.

References: Bradley and Gann 1999, Bruner 1987, Coile 2000, Hall 1978, IRC 1999, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.