



Rare Plants of Louisiana

Schwalbea americana – American chaffseed snapdragon family (Scrophulariaceae)

Rarity Ranks: S1/G2/Fed. listed endangered

Range: AL, CT (extirpated), DE (extirpated), FL, GA, KY (historical), LA, MA (extirpated), MS (historical), MD (extirpated), NC, NJ, NY (extirpated), SC, TN (extirpated), VA (historical), TX (status unknown)

Recognition:

- 1) Stems erect, unbranched, and hairy, up to 2' tall (plants remain short and inconspicuous without fire)
- 2) Leaves alternate, up to 0.8 -1.6" long, with 3 prominent veins, entire margins
- 3) Leaves gradually get smaller up the stem
- 4) Corolla purplish-yellow

Flowering Time: April-June (will flower later in summer if burned during this time)

Light Requirement: Full sun to light shade as under sparse pine canopy



Photo by Latimore Smith

Wetland Indicator Status: FAC – similar likelihood of occurring in both wetlands and non-wetlands

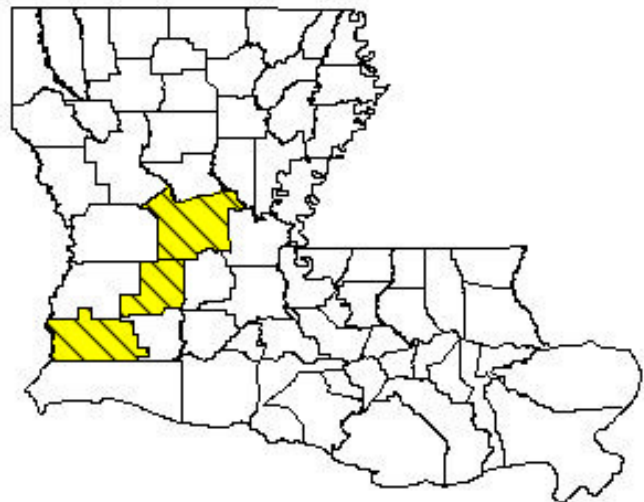
Habitat: The only extant occurrence in Louisiana is on pimple mounds with well-drained sandy soil imbedded in flat, poorly drained longleaf pine flatwoods savannah. May possibly occur in hilly upland longleaf pine country as well. Pimple mounds in savannahs should be the priority habitat in searches given that it is known in that habitat in southwest Louisiana. Associates include longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*), blackjack oak (*Quercus marilandica*), narrowleaf silkgrass (*Pityopsis graminifolia*), hair-awn muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia expansa*), and many more.

Threats:

- 1) Conversion to intensively-managed slash or loblolly pine plantations – chemical and mechanical site prep and dense tree spacing
- 2) Fire exclusion – American chaffseed is extremely fire-dependant
- 3) Residential and commercial development
- 4) Soil disturbance such as food plots and roads can free up growing space for exotics

Beneficial management practices:

- 1) Thinning, targeting for removal off-site species such as loblolly and slash pines
- 2) Prescribed burns during growing season (May and June) for maximum control of woody plants
- 3) Minimize soil disturbance; clean logging equipment prior to entering site to avoid introducing exotics





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Good looking American chaffseed habitat – area has been regularly burned and features a number of low pimple mounds.



Bruce Sorrie



Far Left: American chaffseed in flower.

Left: Previous year's fruiting stems are often persistent. Yellow-flowered plant in background is narrowleaf silkgrass, which is a characteristic associate.

References:

Chafin, L. 2000. Field guide to the rare plants of Florida. Florida Natural Areas Inventory, Tallahassee, Florida.

Kral, R. 1983. A report on some rare, threatened, or endangered forest-related vascular plants of the South. Vol. 2. USDA Forest Service, Tech. Publ. R8-TP2: 719-1305.

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