

BRITTON'S BEARGRASS

Nolina brittoniana Nash

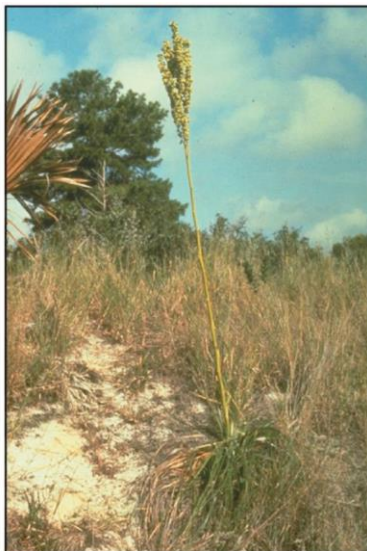
Synonyms: none

Family: Asparagaceae (asparagus)

FNAI Ranks: G3/S3

Legal Status: US-Endangered FL-Endangered

Wetland Status: US-none+ FL-UPL



Bruce F. Hansen



Gary Knight

Field Description: Perennial **herb** with long, stiff **leaves** in a grass-like clump rising from a bulbous stem. **Young leaves** erect; **older leaves** up to 6 feet long and 0.5 inch wide, spreading on the ground. **Flowering stalk** 3 - 6 feet tall, topped by a large, showy cluster of small, white flowers. **Flowers** 6-parted, **male and female flowers** usually on separate plants. **Fruit** a papery, symmetrical, 3-lobed capsule, persisting through the summer.

Similar Species: Spanish bayonets (*Yucca* spp.) have large flowers and erect, fleshy leaves with spiny tips.

Related Rare Species: Florida beargrass (*Nolina atopocarpa*), state-threatened, is similar but has leaves less than 0.2 inch wide and usually less than 3 feet long; flowers greenish-white; fruit asymmetrically lobed. It is locally abundant in Panhandle and central FL flatwoods.

Britton's beargrass

Nolina brittoniana

Habitat: Scrub, sandhills, scrubby flatwoods, and xeric hammocks.

Best Survey Season: Spring; March - May, but fruits, leaves, and growth habit are distinctive all year.

Range-wide Distribution: Endemic to central peninsular Florida, mostly along the Lake Wales Ridge, from Marion County, south to Highlands County.

Conservation Status: More than 90% of Britton's beargrass habitat has been lost to agriculture and development. About 100 populations remain, with half of these occurring on 10 conservation areas.

Protection and Management: Apply prescribed fire to stimulate flowering and eliminate competition by shrubs and trees. Complete purchases of Lake Wales Ridge scrub sites.

References: Coile 2000, Kral 1983, Menges et al. 1996, TNC 1995, USFWS 1998, Ward 1979, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2011