

Rare Plants of Louisiana



Pterocaulon virgatum - wand blackroot Sunflower Family (Asteraceae)

Rarity Rank: S2/G5

	1	2	3	4	5
State					
Global					
	imperiled		rare		secure

Range: LA and TX, also eastern Mexico and West Indies

Recognition:

- Perennial herb, usually robust with one to many stems, 0.8 to 1.5 m tall
- Leaves from 5 to 15 cm long (more than 7 times as long as wide) and usually less than 1 cm wide
- Leaf bases decurrent, forming narrow wings on the stem
- Leaves green above with white-wooly hairs underneath
- Flower heads occur terminally in a compact, interrupted, spike-like aggregation

Flowering Time: August to October

Light Requirement: Full sun

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

Habitat:

Most Louisiana occurrences are in coastal prairie remnants; there are a few occurrences on pimple mounds in saline prairies and in pine flatwoods further inland. There is a report from Grant Parish which needs to be confirmed in the field.

Threats:

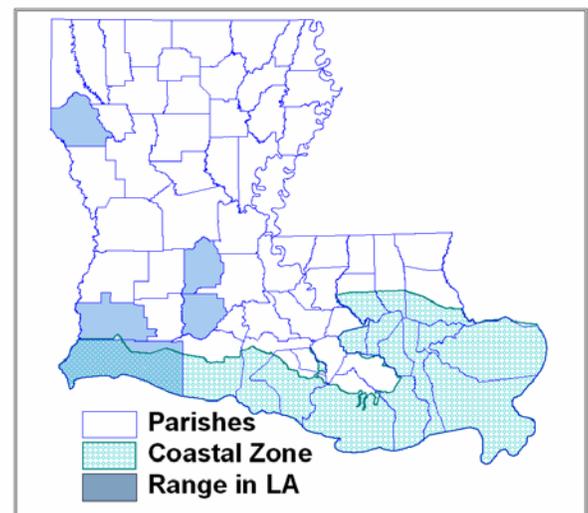
- Habitat conversion - mainly historical as virtually all coastal prairie has been converted to agriculture
- Intensive pine plantation forestry with concomitant threats such as chemical and mechanical site prep and fire exclusion

Beneficial Management Practices:

- Manage pine flatwoods with aggressive thinning (during dry periods) and prescribed burning
- This species is self-fertile and easily propagated by seed, with high germination rates, so re-introduction is relatively practical



Pterocaulon virgatum in fruit – the whitish fluffy material is pappus which is the calyx modified to aid in wind dispersal



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LA River Basins: Calcasieu, Mermentau, Sabine, Red



Above: Stem of *Pterocaulon virgatum* – note how leaf bases are decurrent forming leafy wings on the stem; also the lower surfaces of the leaves are clearly white and closer examination would reveal the presence of many woolly hairs.

Right: Large robust plant of *P. virgatum* in June as height growth is being made and prior to flowering; photo taken in De Soto Parish in a saline prairie.



References:

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- Ghandi, K.N. & R.D. Thomas. 1989. Asteraceae of Louisiana. Sida, Bot. Misc. 4:1-202.
- USDA, NRCS. 2008. The PLANTS Database (<http://plants.usda.gov>). National Plant Data Center, Baton Rouge, LA 70874-4490 USA.

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