



# Rare Plants of Louisiana

## *Geocarpon minimum* – earth-fruit, tinytim Pink family (Caryophyllaceae)

**Rarity Ranks:** S1/G2/Fed. listed threatened

**Range:** AR, LA, MO, TX

**Recognition:**

- 1) Tiny succulent winter annual, branching from the base with branches ~ 1-2” tall
- 2) Evident from late February to late March in Louisiana
- 3) Plants turn reddish or burgundy with age

**Flowering Time:** February - March (affected by local weather – several visits during this period are needed to determine peak abundance). If winter conditions are really droughty, earth-fruit may not be evident at all.



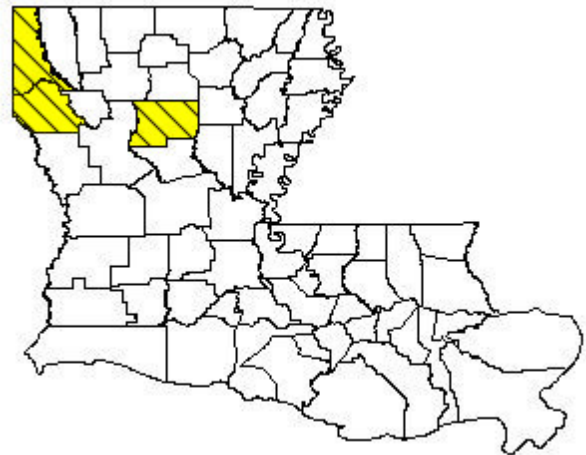
**Light Requirement:** Full sun

**Wetland Status:** Does not occur in wetlands

**Habitats:** Saline prairie around the margins of bare soil “slicks”, or in extreme areas with a thin grass canopy. This species cannot tolerate competition. The rim of a slick is referred to as the cryptogamic lip due to the presence of non-seed “plants” such as blue-green algae, lichens, mosses, etc. Associates include bluets (*Houstonia rosea*), prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia humifusa*), dwarf silverling (*Evolvulus sericeus*), dwarf plantain (*Plantago pusilla*) and rock pink (*Talinum parviflorum*).

**Threats:**

- 1) Surface damage from vehicular traffic
- 2) Soil erosion
- 3) Chemical and mechanical site prep, tree planting
- 4) Trash dumping
- 5) Rooting by feral hogs
- 6) Conversion to pasture grass (e.g. rye or Bermuda)
- 7) Application of fertilizer – this can increase competition from other plants



**Beneficial management practices:**

- 1) Do NOT site prep and attempt to plant trees – the habitat will not grow trees anyway
- 2) Communicate importance of not impacting habitat to hunting clubs and others using the land
- 3) Control hog populations through hunting; exclosures would be practical if employed in small areas
- 4) Do NOT convert to pasture by planting exotic grasses such as Bermuda grass
- 5) Do NOT fertilize saline prairies for pasture “improvement” and avoid off-target application when fertilizing large blocks of timber from aircraft



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Robust earth-fruit plant that has turned reddish with age



Well-developed "slick" on a saline prairie, northwest Louisiana



Rock pink, a reliable associate of earth-fruit



Prickly pear cactus is often conspicuous in saline prairies and attests to the droughtiness of the soils

## References:

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