

Rare Plants of Louisiana



Polygala crenata - scalloped milkwort Milkwort Family (Polygalaceae)

Rarity Rank: S2/G4?

	1	2	3	4	5
State		■			
Global				■	
	imperiled		rare		secure

Range: AL, FL, LA, MS, TX

Recognition:

- Perennial with several to many stems from a caudex (thickened base that is the perenniating structure)
- Stems to ca 30 cm tall, lax and often reclining (may be held erect by surrounding vegetation)
- Leaves variable, from definitely spatula-shaped to narrowly linear or elliptic – varying in length from 3 to 15 mm
- Fresh flowers bright purple, born in terminal racemes
- Seed coat black and covered with whitish hairs



Photo by Gil Nelson

Flowering Time: March to April

Light Requirement: Full sun

Wetland Indicator Status:

FACW – usually in wetlands

Habitat: Longleaf pine flatwoods savannahs.

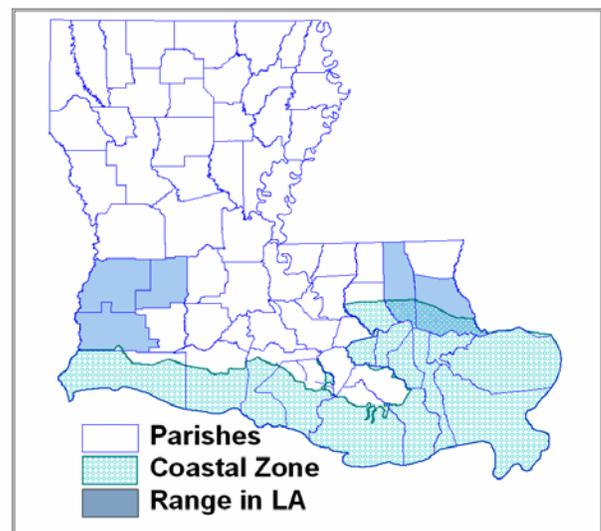
Threats:

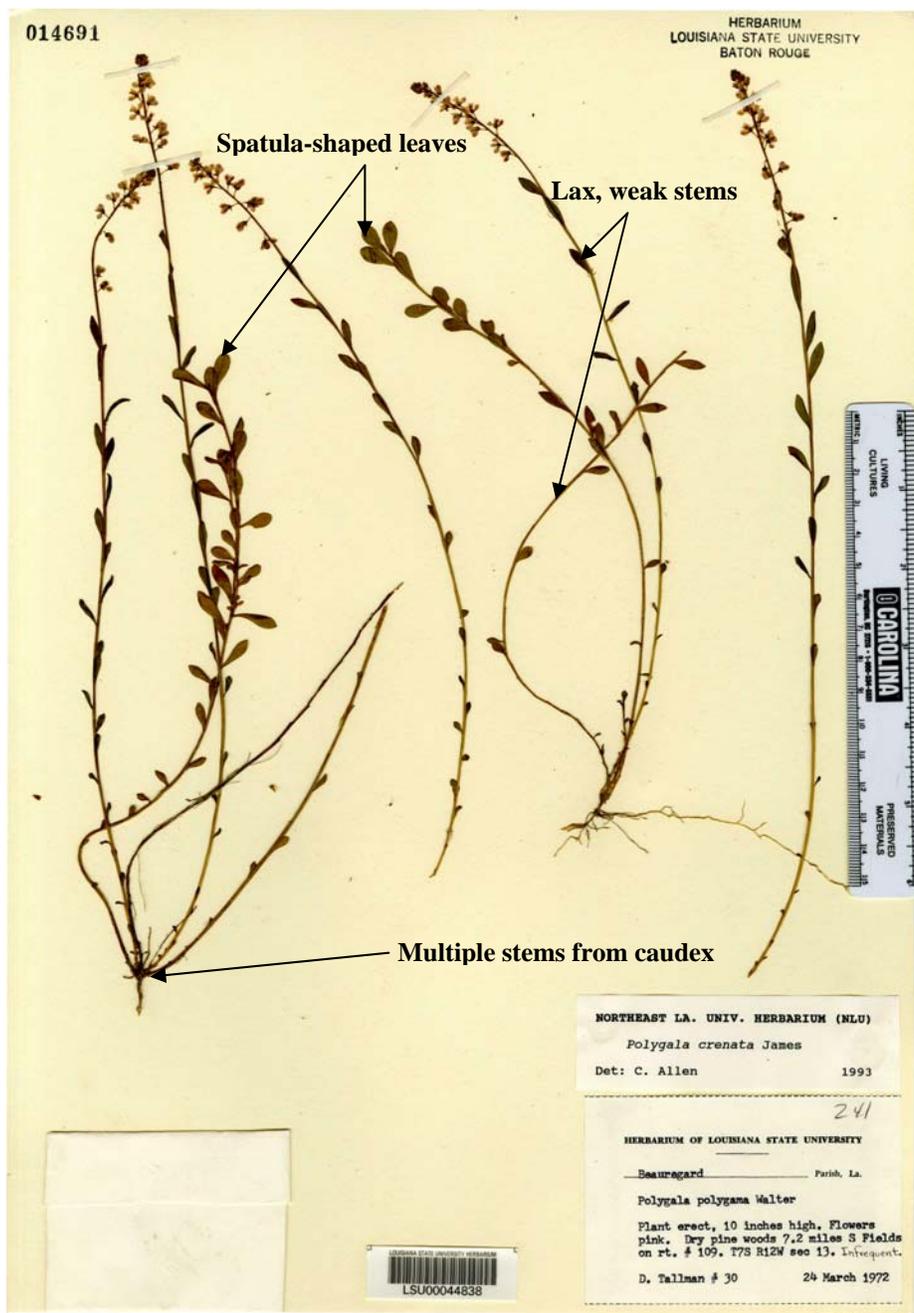
- Residential and commercial development
- Conversion to slash or loblolly pine plantations
- Hydrological alterations (e.g. ditching)
- Soil damage from timber harvesting and planting activities (eg. bedding)
- Fire exclusion or inappropriate fire timing

Beneficial Management Practices:

- Use of growing season prescribed fire (April-June) at a frequency of every 1 to 3 years
- Maintain open stands by regular thinning (harvest timber only during very dry periods)
- Avoid logging during wet periods when the soil is saturated

LA River Basins: Pearl, Pontchartrain, Mermentau, Calcasieu, Sabine





Herbarium specimen of *Polygala crenata*. Specimen shows multiple stems from a caudex and variable leaf size and shape.

Courtesy of LSU Herbarium.

References:

- Godfrey, R. K. and J. W. Wooten. 1981. Aquatic and wetland plants of southeastern United States: dicotyledons. University of Georgia Press. Athens, GA. 933 pp.
- NatureServe. 2007. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 6.2. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>.
- Nelson, G. 2005. East Gulf Coastal Plain wildflowers. The Globe Pequot Press. Guilford, CT. 263 pp.

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