

Rare Plants of Louisiana



Thalassia testudinum - turtle-grass Tape-grass Family (Hydrocharitaceae)

Rarity Rank: S2?/G4G5

	1	2	3	4	5
State					
Global					
	imperiled		rare		secure

Range: FL, LA, MS, TX; Bermuda and West Indies, south to northern South America

Recognition:

- Submerged, meadow-forming marine aquatic plant with linear ribbon-like leaves
- Thick, horizontal, scaly rhizomes bearing spaced clusters of leafy vertical shoots (fibrous remains of old leaves usually present)
- Leaves broadly linear, to 35 cm long by 1 cm wide, minutely toothed at the rounded apices
- Flowers born in sheaths near the base of the shoots; male and female flowers born on separate plants (= dioecious)
- Fruit is rounded, densely warty, about 2 cm long, opening by valves and appearing like an earth-star

Flowering Time: June, fruiting July-October

Wetland Indicator Status:

OBL – almost always in wetlands

Habitat:

Clear shallow saline waters with depths of 0.6 to 1.5 m; salinities range from 20 to over 35 ppt.

Threats:

- Dredging for channel or pipeline construction
- Any activities that increase turbidity and sediment load
- Spoil deposition on sea grass beds
- Contamination by chemicals

Beneficial Management Practices:

- Protect sea grass beds from mechanical and water quality impacts
- Avoid activities in shallow waters that might increase disturbance and turbidity

LA River Basins: Pontchartrain





Fruiting material of *Thalassia testudinum*.

R.A. Howard @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database, courtesy of Smithsonian Institution.

References:

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For more information, please visit our Web pages at

<http://www.wlf.la.gov/wildlife/louisiana-natural-heritage-program> or 225-765-2811

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