

Reflexed Flatsedge *Cyperus refractus*

Description

Reflexed flatsedge is a perennial herb with a triangular stem that grows from 1 to 2½ feet (3-8 dm) tall. The leaves are linear, V-shaped or flat, hairless, and up to 1/3 inch (8 mm) wide. The flowers, appearing from July to August, are grouped in loose, open spikes made up of 15 or more spikelets. Most of the spikelets extend horizontally or upward in a bottlebrush-like appearance, which helps to distinguish this species from similar species that have more downward-oriented spikelets. The spikelets are up to about 1 inch (2.5 cm) long and covered by several overlapping scales, which enclosed the small (1/8 inch, or 3 mm) fruits.

Distribution & Habitat

Reflexed flatsedge has a range from southern Pennsylvania south and west into Florida and Texas. In Pennsylvania, this species reaches a northern border of its known range and has been documented historically in a few southeastern counties. Reflexed flatsedge grows on sandy shorelines and scoured river islands in the Susquehanna River, and elsewhere in dry woods.

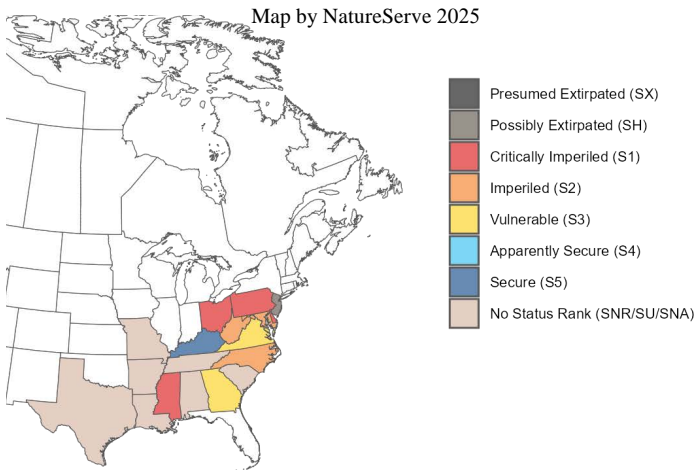


photo source: FNHP

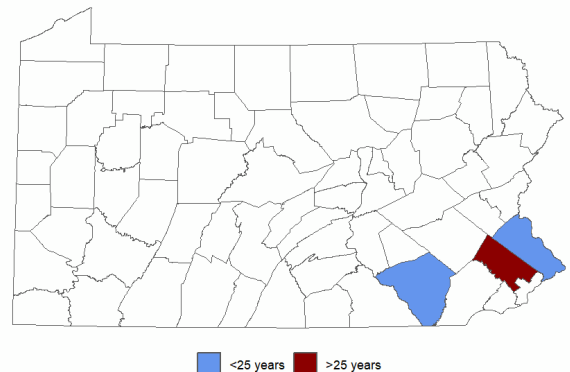
Reflexed flatsedge (*Cyperus refractus*) seed head

North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2025



Reflexed Flatsedge (*Cyperus refractus*)



State Status & Conservation

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) has assigned reflexed flatsedge a rarity status of Endangered, based on the few populations that have been recently documented and the very limited state range. The viability of the riverine populations of reflexed flatsedge and its habitat will require maintaining the natural hydrology of the Susquehanna River, with its seasonal fluctuations in water levels, as well as retaining the natural conditions of the shorelines and islands.

In upland sites, given the preference of the species for relatively open habitats, active management – such as fire, mowing, or invasive species removal – may be required to maintain the proper successional stage.

NatureServe conservation status ranks

State Rank: G5 - Globally secure; S1 – Critically imperiled in Pennsylvania

References

- NatureServe. 2025. NatureServe Explorer [web application] NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at <https://explorer.natureserve.org> (Accessed: May 8, 2025)
- Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program. 2025.
- Rhoads, A. F. and W. M. Klein, Jr. 1993. The Vascular Flora of Pennsylvania: Annotated Checklist and Atlas. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.
- Rhoads, A. F. and T. A. Block. 2007. The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual, Second Edition. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.