

Slender Panicgrass

Dichanthelium xanthophysum

Description

Slender Panic-grass is a perennial grass that may grow to 2 feet (0.6 m) in height. The leaves are alternately arranged, consisting of a basal sheathing portion, which envelopes the stem and varies from hairy to hairless, and a broadly lance-shaped, flattened, and untoothed blade that is 4 to 6 inches (10-15 cm) in length and up to about 1 inch (ca 2.5 cm) in width, heart-shaped at the base, and long-pointed at the tip. The flowers, appearing first in June and July, and sometimes again in the fall, occur within small spikelets that average about 3/16 inch (3.5 mm) in length, have scattered hairs on the outside surface, and are located at the middle and upper part of the stem. In addition to the size of spikelets, the shape of the flowering cluster, or inflorescence, is the main distinguishing feature of this species. While most species of panic-grass have inflorescences with obvious horizontal or ascending branches, in Slender Panic-grass the branches tend to be few and with erect or strongly ascending stalks, giving the overall inflorescence a long and very narrow aspect.



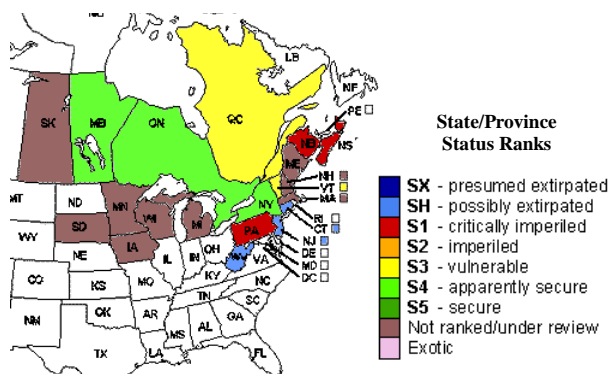
Photo source: John Kumsman (PNHP)

Distribution & Habitat

Slender Panic-grass ranges from Nova Scotia to Saskatchewan and south into New Jersey, West Virginia, Michigan, and Iowa. In Pennsylvania, it represents a northerly species and has been documented historically mostly in the northeastern counties. It grows in well-drained, sandy habitats that receive considerable sun, such as open rocky woods, bedrock outcrops, heath barrens, balds, and mountain summits.

North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2010



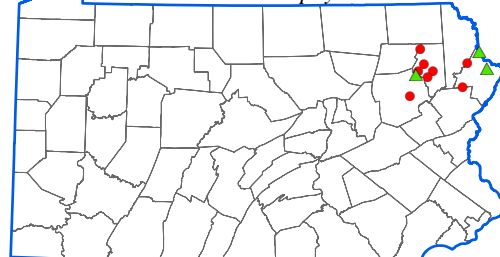
Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers Slender Panic-grass to be a species of special concern, based on the very few locations that have been recently confirmed. It has a PA legal rarity status and a PABS suggested rarity status of Endangered.

Conservation Considerations

The populations of Slender Panic-grass in Pennsylvania are situated in remote areas where the habitat is likely to be kept in a natural state. Active management, such as the use of prescribed fire, may be beneficial in maintaining these areas or in creating additional habitat.

Pennsylvania Distribution *Panicum xanthophysum*



▲ records since 1980 ● records pre-1980
Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program Data 3-2011

NatureServe conservation status ranks

G5 – Globally secure; S1 – Critically Imperiled in Pennsylvania

References

- NatureServe. 2011. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>.
- Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program. 2011.
- Rhoads, A.F. and W.M. Klein, Jr. 1993. The Vascular Flora of Pennsylvania. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Rhoads, A.F. and T.A. Block. 2007. The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual. 2nd edition. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

