

Purple Sandgrass

Triplasis purpurea

Description

Purple Sandgrass is an annual grass that may grow to 2 feet (60 cm) in height, but is usually much shorter and in some situations may be prostrate on the ground. The small swellings, or nodes, on the stem often have a tuft of hairs, or “beard.” The leaves are alternately arranged, consisting of a basal sheath portion that envelops the stem and is often hairy or rough to the touch, and a linear or lance shaped, flattened, and untoothed blade that is 0.5-3 inches (1-7.5 cm) in length and about 1/8 inch (1-5 mm) in width, often hairy or rough to the touch, and pointed at the tip. The leaf blades often get shorter in length upward on the stem, and may become inrolled, making them appear narrower than they really are. The flowers, appearing in August and September, occur in a branched inflorescence (although some inflorescences may be partially hidden in the leaf sheaths) containing many individual spikelets, about 1/4 inch (5-8 mm) in length and often with a purplish cast, each of which contains 2-5 individual flowers. The main scale, or lemma, which subtends an individual flower, has 3 prominent and hairy veins.

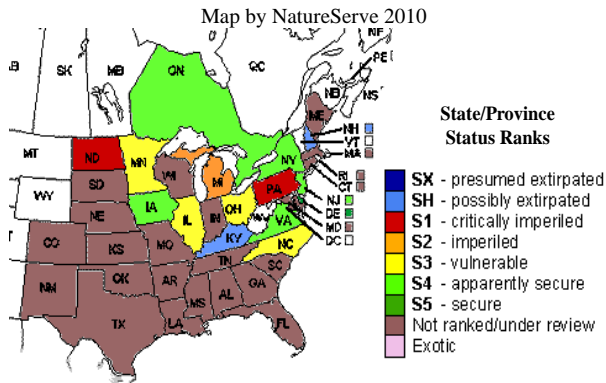


Photo source: John Kunsman (PNHP)

Distribution & Habitat

Purple Sandgrass ranges from Maine to North Dakota and south into Florida and New Mexico. In Pennsylvania, it has been documented historically in the northwestern and southeastern counties. It grows in open, sandy places, such as beaches, dunes, and shores.

North American State/Province Conservation Status



Current State Status

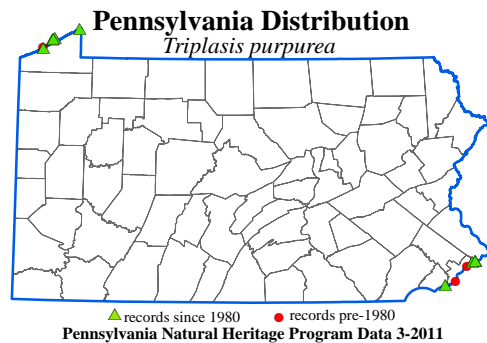
The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers Purple Sandgrass to be a species of special concern, based on the few locations that have been recently confirmed and the restricted habitat. It has a PA legal rarity status and a PABS suggested rarity status of Endangered.

Conservation Considerations

The viability of populations of Purple Sandgrass may require active management in order to maintain early successional conditions and to control invasive species.

NatureServe conservation status ranks

G4G5 – 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.