

Starrush whitetop

(*Rhynchospora colorata*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms.

Starrush whitetop is a unique and long-lived perennial sedge. It is known (and named) for its striking bracts that are often mistaken for a daisy-like flower. The bracts are white with green tips, giving the appearance of having been spray-painted. The inflorescence is actually a dense cluster of small spikes, each bearing many tiny flowers. Leaf blades arise from the base of the plant and are long and tapering. Like most sedges, starrush whitetop stems are triangular. But unlike most sedges and other grass-like species, which are wind-pollinated, starrush whitetop is pollinated by insects that are attracted to the showy bracts.

Starrush whitetop occurs naturally in wet flatwoods, wet prairies, swales and roadside ditches.

The genus name comes from the Greek *rhynchos* (beak) and *spora* (seed) and refers to the plant's beaked fruit or achene.

Family: Cyperaceae

Native range: Nearly throughout Florida; less frequent in Panhandle

To see where natural populations of Starrush whitetop have been vouchered, visit www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.

Hardiness: Zones 8–10

Soil: Moist to inundated sand, loam or muck

Exposure: Full sun to partial shade

Growth habit: 1–2'

Propagation: Seeds, division

Garden tips: Starrush whitetop can make an interesting groundcover in moist landscapes and also works well in water gardens. It can spread if allowed.

Starrush whitetop plants are often available at nurseries that specialize in native plants. Visit PlantRealFlorida.org to find a native nursery on your area.



Photo by Bruce Leander,
Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center