

Rare Plants of Louisiana



Carex decomposita - cypress-knee sedge Sedge Family (Cyperaceae)

Rarity Rank: S3/G3

	1	2	3	4	5
State					
Global					
	imperiled		rare		secure

Range: Much of the eastern U.S., north to MI and NY.

Recognition:

- A stout, robust, clump-forming sedge to ca 1 m tall, growing almost always on woody substrate such as stumps, floating logs, or living trees
- Inflorescences branched and distinctly drooping
- Perigynia (“sacs” that envelope the female flowers and fruits) dark brown at maturity and widest above the middle (= obovate)
- Plants usually very leafy, leaf blades long and v-shaped in cross-section



Flowering/Fruiting Time: April to June

Light Requirement: Shade to full sun

Wetland Indicator Status:

OBL – almost always occurs in wetlands

Habitat:

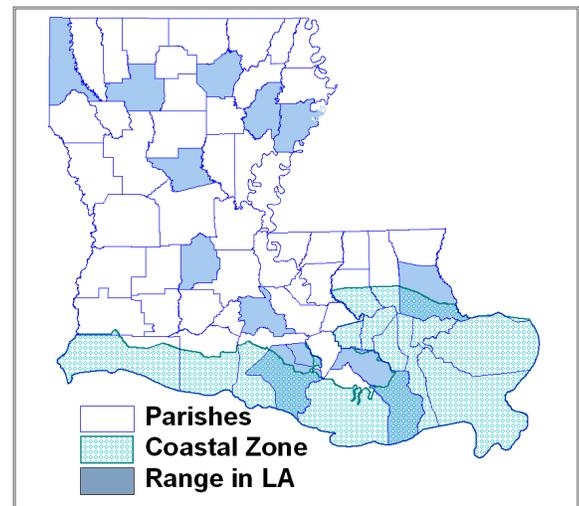
Cypress-tupelo swamps, cypress-studded lakes, isolated natural ponds, beaver ponds, and wet swales in bottomland hardwoods. Almost always grows on woody substrate such as living trees, stumps and logs. Most frequently grows on bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) and buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*); has also been observed in Louisiana growing on tupelogum (*Nyssa aquatica*), swamp blackgum (*Nyssa biflora*), overcup oak (*Quercus lyrata*), green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*) and water hickory (*Carya aquatica*).

Threats:

- Alteration of hydrology (drowning or drying)
- Chemical pollution and excess turbidity
- Herbicide drift from adjacent agricultural operations

Beneficial Management Practices:

- Preservation of hydrologic regime
- Protection of lakes and ponds from agricultural run-off



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LA River Basins: Pearl, Pontchartrain, Barataria, Terrebonne, Atchafalaya, Vermilion-Teche, Mermentau, Red, Ouachita



Above: Nodding, droopy inflorescences of *C. decomposita*



Photo by Michael MacRoberts

Top Right: *C. decomposita* growing on a stump in an oxbow lake along the Red River



Bottom Right: *C. decomposita* on baldcypress trees in Cross Lake, Caddo parish, LA; photo taken in October 2006.

References:

Hill, S. R. 2006. Conservation assessment for the cypress knee sedge (*Carex decomposita* Muhl.) (Draft undergoing peer review). USDA Forest Service, Eastern region. Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

NatureServe. 2007. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 6.2. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>.

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For more information, please visit our Web pages at

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

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