

Southern Sandspur (Southern Sandbur), *Cenchrus echinatus* L.¹

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Classification

Common Name: Southern Sandspur (Southern Sandbur)

Scientific Name: *Cenchrus echinatus* L.

Family: Gramineae (Poaceae), Grass Family

Seedling

The blades are flat and like sandpaper on the upper surface (Figure 1). The ligules are up to 1.6 mm long. The lower papery portion of the ligule is only 0.2 mm long and the fringe of hairs is up to 1.4 mm long.

Mature Plant

Southern Sandspur is an annual with ascending stem tips from the lower nodes which bend and root (Figure 2). The leaf sheaths are completely without hairs or can have long hairs along the margins. The blades lack hairs above and below, or can have long scattered hairs above. The seedheads are composed of spiny burs and are 3-14 cm long and 1-2 cm wide.



Figure 1. Seedling, Southern Sandspur (Southern Sandbur), *Cenchrus echinatus* L.

The burs, excluding the spines, are 4.1-6.3 mm wide and 5.3-8.0 mm long to the tip of the spikelets. The spines are of two kinds: 1) flattened spines that are spread over the body of the bur and 2) fine slender bristle-like spines that are situated in a ring at the base of the bur. The seedheads appear throughout the year in the South and during the summer and fall in the North.

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Figure 2. Mature plant, Southern Sandspur (Southern Sandbur), *Cenchrus echinatus* L.

History

The name *Cenchrus* is from the Greek word for millet, *cenchros*. The Greek species name *echinatus* means armed with spines.

Habitat

This weed occurs throughout Florida in turf, cultivated and disturbed areas; throughout warmer areas of the United States, from North Carolina to California; Mexico; Central America; South America; the West Indies; Pacific Islands; and Australia.

Biology

The southeastern United States has two similar weedy sandspurs. These are Coast Sandspur (*C. incertus*) and the Southern Sandspur. Two kinds of spines on the bur of the Southern Sandspur separate it from the Coast Sandspur.