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# Conserving South Carolina's At-Risk Species: *Species facing threats to their survival*

## Mountain purple pitcher plant

(*Sarracenia purpurea* var. *montana*)



Mountain purple pitcher plant / Alan Cressler

### Description

The Mountain purple pitcher plant is a perennial herb with leaves modified into inflated pitchers. Pitchers are 2 - 18 inches long, often resting on the ground, and green with purple veins. The pitcher is widest at its middle, with a wing on the upper side and an erect, wavy-edged hood. Pitchers persist through the winter. Flower stalks are 6 - 28 inches tall and leafless. The flower is solitary with 5 drooping, maroon petals, 1 - 2 $\frac{3}{8}$  inches long. There are five sepals that are maroon on the outside, greenish on the inside and a yellow-green, umbrella-shaped style disk in the center of the flower. Fruit is a round, warty capsule,  $\frac{3}{8}$  -  $\frac{7}{8}$  inch in diameter.

Pitcherplants reproduce sexually and also vegetatively by spread of underground stems or rhizomes. The unusual shape of

the flowers, with their drooping petals and umbrella-like style disk, promotes cross-pollination by insects. Pitcher plants are usually 4 - 5 years old before they flower and may live to be 20 - 30 years old.

### Range

Rangewide, the plant is considered rare with only a few dozen populations in mountain and seepage bogs of the Blue Ridge Mountains and adjacent piedmont of southwestern North Carolina (south of Asheville County), northwestern South Carolina (Greenville County), and northeastern Georgia (Rabun County).

### Habitat

Habitat for the Mountain purple pitcher plant includes seepy bogs with sphagnum moss, mountain laurel, and rhododendron.

### Status

NatureServe's Rounded Global Status is T2 - Imperiled. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was petitioned to list the species in April 2010 and in September 2011 issued a 90-day finding indicating listing may be warranted.

### Threats

Threats include ecosystem-wide hydrology changes due to habitat conversion, habitat loss, and fire suppression. Use of herbicides in powerline rights-of-way may have impacts on certain populations. Pitcher plants are also threatened by collectors and off-road vehicle use in some areas. Digging and rooting by feral hogs is also a threat to the species.

### Management/Protection Needs

Avoid draining and conversion of wetlands. Apply prescribed fire every 2 - 3

years to prevent closure of canopy. Avoid herbicide use near known populations. Protect known populations from poaching and damage from off-road vehicle use. Encourage feral hog eradication efforts. Continue surveying for the species and monitoring known populations.



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### References

Georgia Department of Natural Resources - Rare Plant Species Profiles: <http://georgiawildlife.com/speciesinfo/plants>

NatureServe. 2017. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://explorer.natureserve.org>.

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