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Conserving South Carolina's At-Risk Species:

Species facing threats to their survival

Georgia leadplant

(*Amorpha georgiana* var. *georgiana*)



Georgia leadplant / Photo credit: Bruce Sorrie

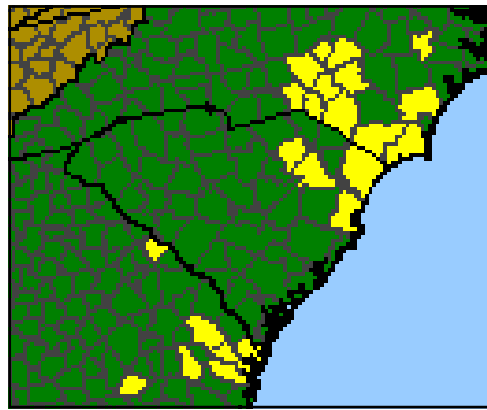
Description

The Georgia leadplant is a woody subshrub, 1 - 3 feet (30 - 100 cm) tall with smooth or nearly hairless stems. Leaves are up to 7 inches (18 cm) long, alternate, with 11 - 47 leaflets; leaf stalks are up to ¾ inch (20 mm) long. Leaflets are ¼ - ½ inch (0.6 - 1.2 cm) long, oblong, with inrolled margins; the midvein of each leaflet extends beyond the tip into a tiny, sharp point. Flower clusters are 1 - 2¾ inches (2.5 - 7 cm) long. Flowers have only 1 purple petal and 10 orange-tipped stamens. The fruit pod is less than ¼ inch (0.5 cm) long, wider at the tip, tapering to the base. Surveys for the plant are best conducted during flowering, which is mid-April–early May. Plants flower and fruit the first and second years after a fire. Georgia false indigo (*Amorpha georgiana* var. *confusa*) reportedly flowers later from June to mid-July. Fruits of the Georgia leadplant may persist until early April of the following year and are also helpful in identification.

Range

The Georgia leadplant is rare throughout its range. It has been documented from the Inner and Middle Coastal Plain (mostly in the Fall-line Sandhills) of North

Carolina south sparingly through the South Carolina Sandhills to the Altamaha Grit region of southeastern Georgia. In South Carolina, the plant is known from Darlington and Florence Counties. Currently, there are 17 extant occurrences - none from South Carolina. These occurrences represent a total of 33 sites, of which 29 lie within the Little River corridor.



Range map for *Amorpha georgiana* var. *georgiana* and *Amorpha georgiana* var. *confusa*; *Biota of North America*, 2014.

Habitat

Georgia leadplant occurs primarily on pine/shrub/wiregrass terraces along rivers and large streams. Research conducted on Georgia leadplant in North Carolina indicates that plant is most often found associated with the following species: pineland threeawn (*Aristida stricta*), Sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*), evening trumpetflower (*Gelsemium sempervirens*), inkberry (*Ilex glabra*), sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*), water oak (*Quercus nigra*), cat greenbrier (*Smilax glauca*), and creeping blueberry (*Vaccinium crassifolium*).

Status

NatureServe's Rounded Global Status is T2 - Imperiled with about 17 known ele-

ment occurrences. In South Carolina, the species is considered to be ranked S1 - critically imperiled and currently does not have any legal status. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was petitioned to list the species in April 2010 and published a substantial 90-day finding in September 2011 indicating listing may be warranted.

Threats

The plant appears to face a variety of threats, including damming of rivers, conversion of habitat to pine plantations, fire suppression, land clearing activities, agricultural fields, and development.

Management/Protection Needs

Apply prescribed fire in longleaf pine stands every 3 - 5 years, or use hand-clearing to maintain openings in the canopy. Avoid clearcutting and other mechanical disturbances. More research needs to be conducted on seed dispersal, viability, and establishment as these issues are very important to the survival of the species.

References

Georgia Department of Natural Resources - Rare Plant Species Profiles: <http://georgiawildlife.com/speciesinfo/plants>
Miller, Vickie Marie. *Habitat Characterization of Amorpha georgiana* var. *georgiana* Groups at Fort Bragg, North Carolina; A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of North Carolina State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science, Natural Resources. Raleigh, N.C. 2004.
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Contact

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
South Carolina Field Office
843/727-4707
april_punsalan@fws.gov