



**Common Name:** BLUE RIDGE GOLDEN RAGWORT

**Scientific Name:** *Packera millefolia* (Torrey & Gray) T.M. Barkley

**Other Commonly Used Names:** piedmont ragwort

**Previously Used Scientific Names:** *Senecio millefolium* Torrey & Gray

**Family:** Asteraceae/Compositae (composite)

**Rarity Ranks:** G2/S1

**State Legal Status:** Threatened

**Federal Legal Status:** none

**Federal Wetland Status:** none

**Description:** Perennial **herb** 12 - 32 inches (30 - 70 cm) tall. **Stems** erect and ribbed, with patches of woolly hairs in the angle between leaf and stem. **Lower leaves** up to 12 inches (30 cm) long, alternate, deeply divided into many segments, each segment subdivided at least once into many very narrow segments, similar to yarrow leaves; **stem leaves** similar but smaller. **Flower heads** solitary at the tips of branches arching upward near the top of the stem; heads surrounded by a whorl of bracts about ¼ inch (4 - 7 mm) high, each head consisting of 8 - 13 yellow **ray flowers** up to ½ inch (8 - 12 mm) long and many darker yellow **disk flowers** tightly packed in the center of the head. **Fruit** less than ⅛ inch (about 2 mm) long, ribbed, dry, seed-like.

**Similar Species:** Golden ragwort (*Packera anonyma* or *Senecio anonymus*) is a common, sometimes weedy, species throughout Georgia. Its leaves are deeply divided into coarsely toothed (but not finely subdivided) segments.

**Related Rare Species:** Balsam ragwort (*Packera paupercula* or *Senecio pauperculus*, Special Concern) occurs in moist meadows and prairies in Floyd County. It resembles other ragworts, but the lower leaves are oval or lance-shaped and toothed; flower heads are fewer than 20.

**Habitat:** High elevation granite outcrops, domes, and cliffs.

**Life History:** Blue Ridge golden ragwort is a perennial herb that reproduces sexually. Its flowers attract large insects, such as butterflies, and smaller ones, such as bees. Butterflies make use of the ray flowers for landing platforms while they probe for nectar; bees are able to quickly visit a large number of disk flowers and gather the minute amounts of nectar available from each flower. Small insects visit a large number of ragwort flower heads in a relatively small area, effecting self-pollination of flowers within a head or on the same plant; large insects tend to fly longer distances, visiting a variety of plants, increasing the chances of cross-pollination. Ragwort seeds are dispersed by animals, gravity, and possibly wind.

**Survey Recommendations:** Surveys are best conducted during flowering (late May–July).

**Range:** Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia.

**Threats:** Development of ridgelines and other high-elevation sites for second homes. Trampling by hikers and climbers and subsequent erosion. Disturbance invites invasion by the common and weedy golden ragwort which has the potential to genetically “swamp” the Blue ridge golden ragwort.

**Georgia Conservation Status:** Three populations are known, 2 on private land, one on National Forest land.

**Conservation and Management Recommendations:** Direct foot traffic away from plants. Remove nearby populations of the common golden ragwort (*Packera anonyma*) which threatens to genetically “swamp” the rare species by hybridization.

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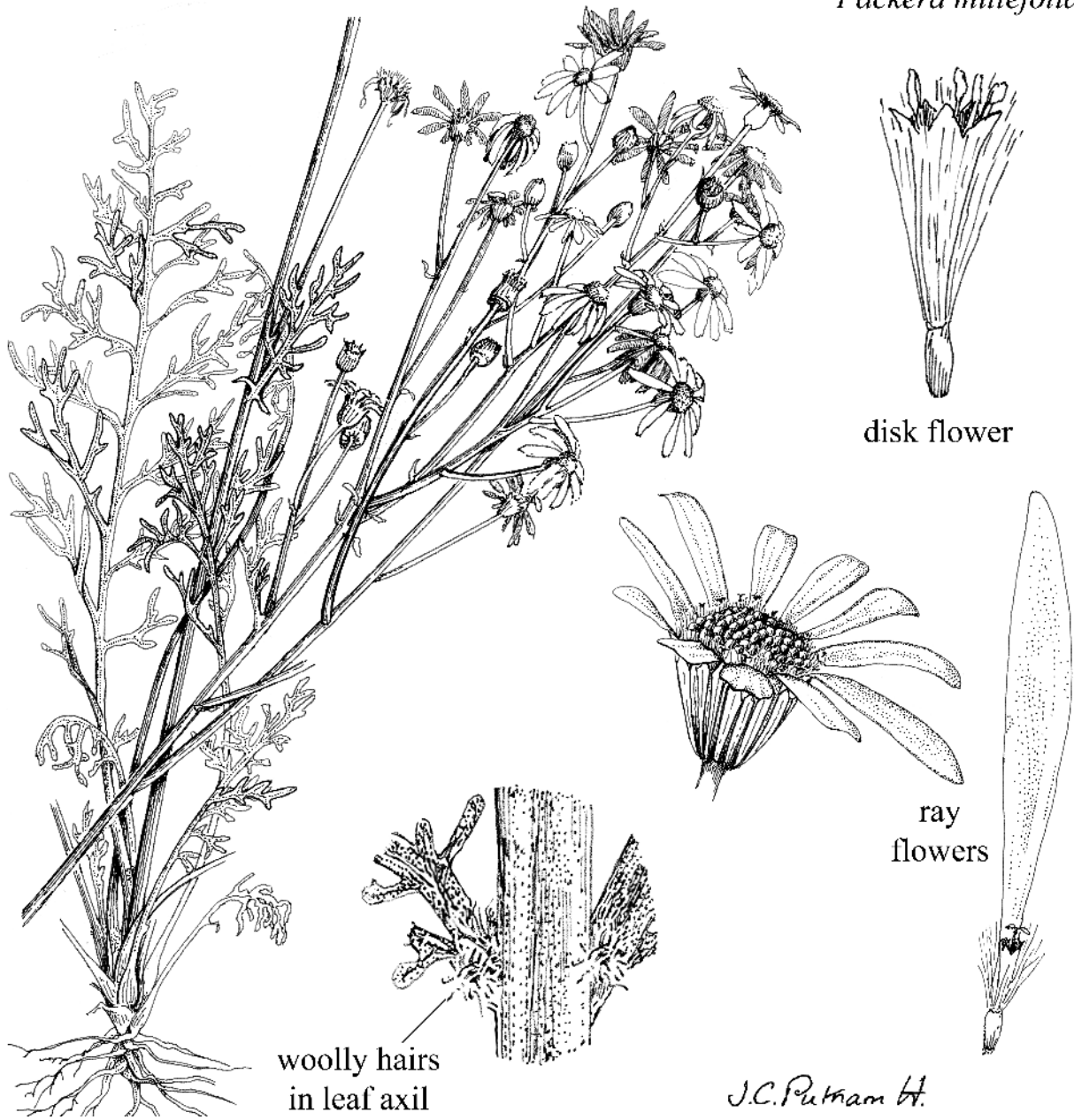
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L. Chafin, July 2008: original account

K. Owers, Feb. 2010: added pictures

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*Packera millefolia*





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