Common Name: ELLIOTT'S CROTON

Scientific Name: *Croton elliottii* Chapman

Other Commonly Used Names: none

Previously Used Scientific Names: none

Family: Euphorbiaceae (spurge)

Rarity Ranks: G2G3/S2S3

State Legal Status: Special Concern

Federal Legal Status: none

Federal Wetland Status: FACW+

Description: Annual **herb** 20 - 40 inches (50 - 100 cm) tall with a single, hairy, orange-brown, repeatedly forking stem, each branch usually topped by a flower cluster. **Leaves** 1½ - 2⅜ inches (4 - 6 cm) long and ⅜ - ⅝ inch (1 - 1.5 cm) wide, alternate, narrowly oblong with smooth margins, blunt rounded tips, and rounded bases; covered with gray, star-shaped hairs; **leaf stalks** orange-brown and hairy; all the hairs on leaves and stalks are a single color – gray. **Flower clusters** compact, containing both female and male flowers; **female flowers** with 5 - 7 oblong sepals with hooded, upcurved tips (there are no petals); **male flowers** with 5 oval sepals; 5 narrow petals; and 8 - 10 stamens. **Fruit** about ¼ inch (5 mm) wide, covered with star-shaped hairs, rounded with 3 lobes, each lobe with 1 seed.

Similar Species: Members of the genus *Croton* are distinguished by the star-shaped hairs on leaves and stems and by the lack of milky latex; most occur in dry, upland sites. Elliott's croton is the only *Croton* that occurs on the exposed shores of ponds. Hogwort (*Croton capitatus*) leaves are large, up to 6 inches (15 cm) long, and have pointed tips; it occurs in disturbed areas such as old fields.

Habitat: Exposed shores of limesink depression ponds, flatwoods ponds, and clay-based Carolina bays.

Life History: Elliott's croton is an annual herb that reproduces by seeds that are capable of persisting in an underground seed bank for years. Plants appear by the hundreds when water levels in a pond drop; fruits develop and seeds are quickly shed after the plants flower. If their pond habitat remains flooded, plants may not be seen for years, until water levels drop again and seeds germinate.

Survey Recommendations: Surveys are best conducted during flowering and fruiting (summer), but plants may be recognized by their leaves and stems throughout the growing season.

Range: Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and South Carolina.

Threats: Many of Georgia's flatwoods ponds have been destroyed by draining and filling and conversion to agriculture and pine plantations.

Georgia Conservation Status: More than 40 ponds are known to support this species, but all are on a single conservation area.

Conservation and Management Recommendations: Apply prescribed fire to flatwoods and savannas every 2 - 3 years during the growing season, allowing fires to burn across ponds. Avoid placing roads and firebreaks through flatwoods and in the transition zones between ponds and surrounding habitat. Avoid draining ponds, lowering water tables, and otherwise altering

hydrology. Protect flatwoods and savannas from development and conversion to pine plantations.

Selected References:

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Weakley, A.S. 2007. Flora of the Carolinas, Virginia, Georgia, and surrounding areas. University of North Carolina Herbarium, Chapel Hill.

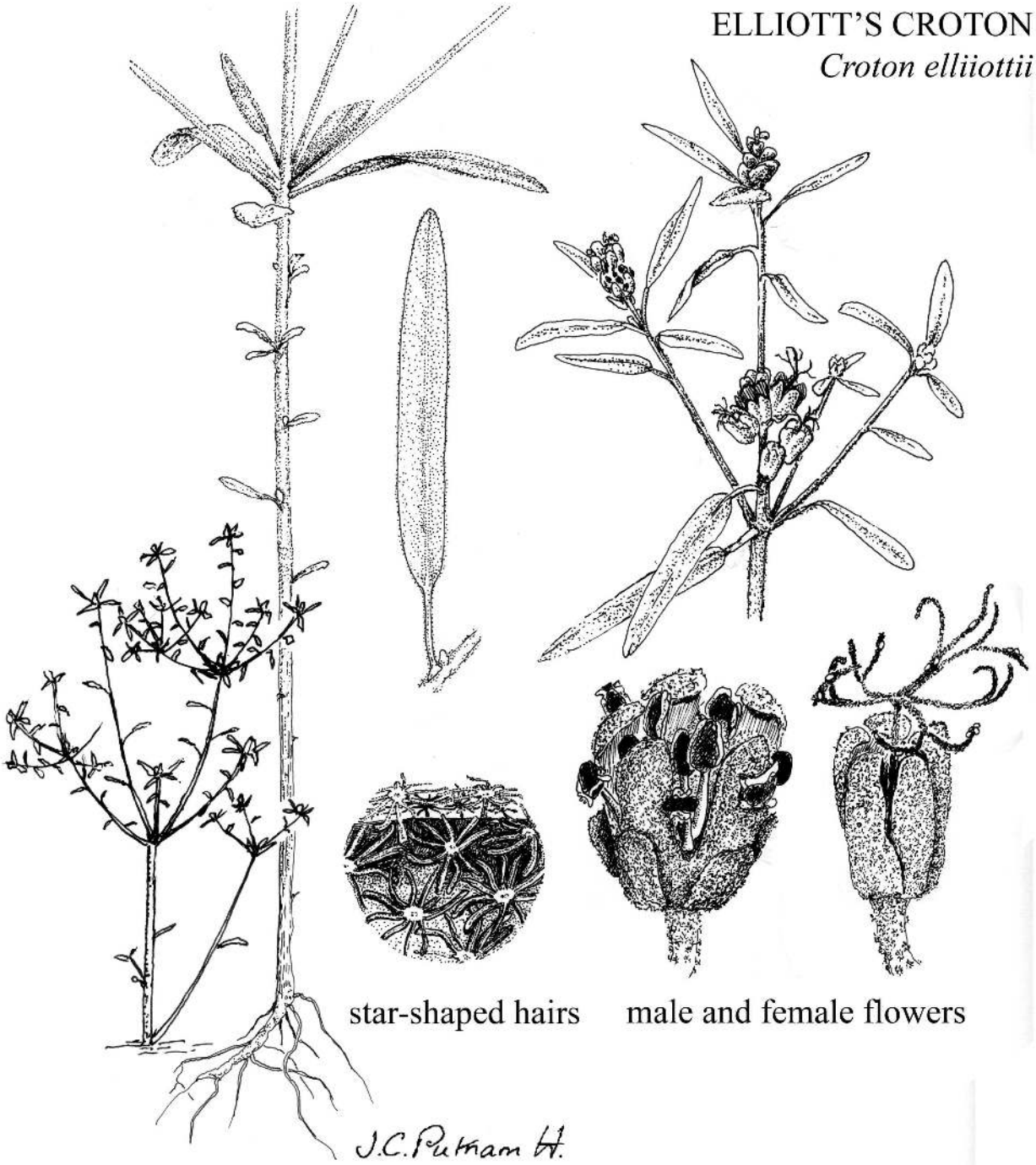
Author of species account: Linda G. Chafin

Date Compiled or Updated:

L. Chafin, Sept. 2007: original account
K. Owers, Jan. 2010: updated status and ranks, added pictures

ELLIOTT'S CROTON

Croton elliiottii



star-shaped hairs

male and female flowers

J.C. Putnam H.

Habitat

Male and female flowers