



Common Name: ALLEGHENY SPURGE

Scientific Name: *Pachysandra procumbens* Michaux

Other Commonly Used Names: mountain pachysandra, mountain spurge

Previously Used Scientific Names: *Pachysandra erecta* Rafinesque ex Baillon

Family: Buxaceae (boxwood)

Rarity Ranks: G4G5/S1S2

State Legal Status: Rare

Federal Legal Status: none

Federal Wetland Status: none

Description: Perennial **herb** with fleshy, reddish-green stems up to 8 inches (20 cm) long, usually hidden under leaf litter. **Leaves** 1¾ - 3 inches (4.5 - 8 cm) long and 1 - 2¾ inches (3 - 6 cm) wide, oval, thick, coarsely and irregularly toothed, alternate, evergreen, dark green mottled

with light green. **Flower spike** 1 - 4 inches (3 - 10 cm) long, with an erect, fleshy, reddish stalk that rises from the previous year's growth; the flower spike is often hidden in leaf litter. **Female flowers** inconspicuous, at the base of the spike, enclosed in 4 reddish bracts. **Male flowers** at the top of the spike with 4 - 7 white, fragrant, showy stamens; 4 reddish bracts at the base of the flower; and no petals or sepals. **Fruit** a round capsule, about $\frac{3}{8}$ inch (1 cm) long, with 2 - 4 pointed beaks; rarely seen.

Similar Species: Japanese spurge (*Pachysandra terminalis*) is widely used as a groundcover; it may persist at old home sites or rarely escape into natural areas. It forms dense, leafy mats and has smaller, more sharply and regularly toothed leaves, 1 - $2\frac{3}{8}$ inches (3 - 6 cm) long and $\frac{1}{2}$ - 1 inch (1.3 - 2.5 cm) wide.

Related Rare Species: None in Georgia.

Habitat: Moist hardwood forests over soils high in calcium.

Life History: Allegheny spurge is a perennial herb. It is monoecious – it has separate female and male flowers occurring on the same plant. Japanese spurge flowers are visited by bees, and it seems likely that bees, flies, and beetles visit the sweet-smelling flowers of Allegheny spurge. Fruits are rarely seen and most populations appear to spread vegetatively, by the growth of stolons (horizontal, ground-level stems).

Survey Recommendations: Surveys may be conducted year-round since leaves are evergreen; leaves may turn reddish-brown in the winter. Plants flower late March–April.

Range: Georgia, Florida, west to Louisiana and north to Pennsylvania and Indiana.

Threats: Destruction and conversion of habitat by logging, clearing, and development. Browsing by deer and rutting by feral hogs. Invasion by exotic pest plants especially Japanese honeysuckle.

Georgia Conservation Status: Six populations have been observed but only 4 have survived, all on private land

Conservation and Management Recommendations: Maintain hardwood canopy cover. Avoid clearcutting. Reduce the size of Georgia's deer population. Eradicate feral hogs and exotic pest plant species such as Japanese honeysuckle.

Selected References:

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Date Compiled or Updated:

L. Chafin, July 2008: original account

K. Owers, Feb. 2010: added pictures

