



Common Name: SUN-LOVING DRABA

Scientific Name: *Draba aprica* Beadle

Other Commonly Used Names: open-ground whitlow-grass, open-ground draba, granite whitlow-grass

Previously Used Scientific Names: none

Family: Brassicaceae/Cruciferae (mustard)

Rarity Ranks: G3/S1S2

State Legal Status: Endangered

Federal Legal Status: none

Federal Wetland Status: none

Description: Annual **herb**, usually germinating in the fall and overwintering as a rosette of leaves. **Stem** 3 - 8 (8 - 20 cm) inches tall, erect, sometimes with a few short branches above mid-stem. **Basal rosette leaves** $\frac{5}{8}$ - $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches (1.5 - 3 cm) long, oval to nearly round, some with a few low teeth. **Stem leaves** up to 1 inch (2.5 cm) long near the base, shorter and more widely spaced upward along the stem, alternate, with no or very short leaf stalks. **Flower clusters** at the top of the stem on short stalks and in the angles between leaves and stem. **Flowers** with 4 white petals, $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (3 mm) long, rounded or notched at the tip (late-flowering plants may lack petals). **Fruit** a pod less than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (4 - 6 mm) long, on short, densely clustered stalks. Stems, leaves, and fruits are covered with **star-shaped hairs** (visible with 10x magnification).

Similar Species: Short-fruited whitlow-grass (*Draba brachycarpa*) usually has more and longer branches, some rising from near the base of the plant; and its fruits are hairless. It blooms and sets fruit earlier than open-ground whitlow-grass. Spring whitlow-grass (*D. verna*) has only basal rosette leaves (no stem leaves), and has deeply notched petals and smooth, hairless fruits.

Related Rare Species: None in Georgia.

Habitat: Shallow soils on and around granite outcrops, usually near the edges of “islands” of eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) trees.

Life History: Sun-loving draba is a winter annual, germinating in late fall–early spring, and forming a rosette of tiny leaves. A single flowering stem is produced by each plant in early spring. Early flowers of sun-loving draba are probably self-pollinated since their small size and low numbers are unlikely to attract many insect pollinators. Late-flowering plants, which produce no petals, are almost certainly self-pollinated. Sun-loving draba does not tolerate competition and is quickly overwhelmed by other herbs and grasses; as a result, it occurs in partially shaded areas with thin, dry soil where other plants cannot thrive.

Survey Recommendations: Surveys are best conducted during flowering (March–early April) and fruiting (April–May). The hairy fruits are important for identification.

Range: Piedmont of Georgia and South Carolina, and the Ozark Plateau of Arkansas and Missouri.

Threats: Degradation of granite outcrop habitat by quarrying, trash dumping, invasive plants, and off-road-vehicles. Trampling of plants.

Georgia Conservation Status: About 10 populations are known, only 4 on conservation lands.

Conservation and Management Recommendations: Protect granite outcrops from quarrying, trash dumping, and off-road-vehicle use. Create buffers and limit development around outcrops. Eradicate exotic pest plants. Map locations of plants and direct foot traffic away from populations.

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Date Compiled or Updated:

L. Chafin, Feb. 2007: original account

K. Owers, Jan. 2010: updated status and ranks, added pictures



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