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**Common Name:** SWAMP BLACK-EYED SUSAN

**Scientific Name:** *Rudbeckia auriculata* (Perdue) Kral

**Other Commonly Used Names:** Alabama coneflower, eared coneflower, clasping susan

**Previously Used Scientific Names:** *Rudbeckia fulgida* Aiton var. *auriculata* Perdue

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

**Rarity Ranks:** G1/S1

**State Legal Status:** Endangered

**Federal Legal Status:** none

**Federal Wetland Status:** FACW

**Description:** Perennial **herb** with smooth, erect stems up to 10 feet (300 cm) tall. **Lower leaf blades** up to 2 feet (20 - 65 cm) long and 3 - 8 inches (8 - 20 cm) wide, alternate, oval or lance-shaped, with rounded or pointed tips, smooth or hairy surfaces, entire or toothed edges; leaf stalks  $\frac{1}{3}$  -  $\frac{1}{2}$  the total length of the leaves. **Upper and midstem leaves** decrease in size up the stem, lack leaf stalks, and clasp the stem with “eared” bases. **Flower clusters** large, much-branched, and open, with many heads. **Flower head** with a raised, purple-brown disk,  $\frac{3}{8}$  -  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch (1 - 1.7 cm) wide; 8 - 14 bright yellow ray flowers, each about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch (1.8 - 3 cm) long; and a whorl of stiff, greenish bracts surrounding the base of the head. **Fruits** about  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch (3.5 - 5 mm) long, seed-like, shiny, reddish-brown, with 4 ribs.

**Similar Species:** Cut-leaved coneflower (*Rudbeckia laciniata*) is a similar plant that occurs in the same habitat as swamp black-eyed susan. Its leaves are usually dissected or lobed, and its disk flowers are yellow-green.

**Related Rare Species:** Orange coneflower (*Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *speciosa*, Special Concern) occurs in open woods over limestone in northwest Georgia; it is less than 4 feet (120 cm) tall, with a hairy stem, and its ray flowers are orange-yellow. Also see sun-facing coneflower (*R. heliopsidis*) on this website.

**Habitat:** Sunny wet meadows, bogs, and seeps; edges of swamps and floodplains; stream banks and islands; wet rock outcrops; roadside ditches and rights-of-way through these habitats.

**Life History:** Swamp black-eyed susan is a perennial herb that reproduces sexually as well as vegetatively by the spread of rhizomes. Its flowers are pollinated by bees, butterflies, and flies, and will not set fruit unless cross-pollinated. Small populations attract many fewer pollinators than do larger, showier stands, and may fail to produce seeds. In large populations, seeds are produced and then dispersed by gravity and flowing water, if nearby. However, seedlings are seldom seen in the wild, probably because of a lack of suitable seedbed. Swamp black-eyed susan seeds will germinate only on cleared patches of bare mineral soil produced by disturbances such as fire and stream scouring – natural processes that have been interrupted at many sites.

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

**Range:** Georgia, Florida, and Alabama.

**Threats:** Fire suppression, damming and polluting of streams, conversion of habitat to pine plantations, agriculture, and developments; use of herbicides in rights-of-way; invasion by exotic pest plants; grazing in streamside zones; overbrowsing by deer.

**Georgia Conservation Status:** Plants occur at one creek site, on the stream bank and on a midstream island; this site is on private land.

**Conservation and Management Recommendations:** Use prescribed fire or hand-clearing to remove competing vegetation. Avoid mechanical disturbances, such as silvicultural site preparation, to the ground cover. Avoid use of herbicides in rights-of-way, and mow early in the year to avoid flowering period. Eradicate exotic pest plants. Protect plants from grazing and browsing.

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**Author of Species Account:** Linda G. Chafin

**Date Compiled or Updated:**

L. Chafin, Aug. 2008: original account

K. Owers, Feb. 2010: added pictures

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