



**Common Name:** CAROLINA CROWNBEARD

**Scientific Name:** *Verbesina walteri* Shinnery

**Other Commonly Used Names:** Walter's wingstem

**Previously Used Scientific Names:** *Athanasia paniculata* Walter, *Ridan paniculata* (Walter) Small

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

**Rarity Ranks:** G4/S1?

**State Legal Status:** Special Concern

**Federal Legal Status:** none

**Federal Wetland Status:** FAC-

**Description:** Perennial **herb** with smooth, erect stems 3 -13 feet (1 - 4 meters) tall. **Leaves** 4 - 8 inches (10 - 20 cm) long and  $\frac{3}{4}$  -  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches (2 - 7 cm) wide, lance-shaped or oval, with pointed tips, tapering bases, and toothed edges; rough-hairy, alternate; leaf tissue forms narrow **wings** on the leaf stalk and down the stem. **Flower cluster** large and open, with 10 - 100 flower heads.

**Flower heads** rounded with a few, narrow, down-curved bracts and many white, tubular disk flowers; there are no ray flowers. **Fruit** about 1/8 inch (3 - 4.5 mm) long, oval, seed-like, hairy, black with pale brown wings and 2 bristle-like awns.

**Similar Species:** Carolina crownbeard is the only *Verbesina* species with a globose head bearing only white disk flowers. Vegetatively, it most closely resembles common wingstem (*V. alternifolia*) but this species has yellow disk flowers and 2 - 10 yellow ray flowers per head. Virginia wingstem has white flowers but its heads have both ray and disk flowers.

**Related Rare Species:** Hairy wingstem (*Verbesina helianthoides*, Special Concern) occurs in a mixed pine-hardwood forest in Bibb County. It has hairy, winged stems up to 4 feet (1.2 meters) tall and alternate, toothed, lance-shaped leaves with very hairy lower surfaces. The flower heads have many green, erect bracts, 8 - 15 yellow ray flowers, and yellow disk flowers.

**Habitat:** Moist slopes of hardwood bluffs and edges of swamps along the Savannah River; usually in calcium-rich soils.

**Life History:** Carolina crownbeard is a perennial herb that reproduces sexually; little else is known about its life history. Its showy flower heads, composed of disk flowers only, probably attract a variety of pollinators, including bees and butterflies. The fruits, with 2 pointed bristles, would easily stick to fur and feathers and are probably dispersed by animals.

**Survey Recommendations:** Surveys are best conducted during flowering (late August–early October).

**Range:** Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Oklahoma.

**Threats:** Logging, clearing, and conversion of habitat to developments and pine plantations. Canopy closure. Competition from exotic pest plants.

**Georgia Conservation Status:** Two populations are known; both occur on private land.

**Conservation and Management Recommendations:** Protect river bluffs and swamps from clearcutting. Use hand-clearing and selective cutting to create small canopy gaps. Eradicate exotic pest plants.

#### **Selected References:**

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

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L.Chafin, Jan. 2009: original account

D.Weiler, Jan. 2010: added pictures



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*Verbesina walteri*

