



Common Name: FRINGED CAMPION

Scientific Name: *Silene polypetala* (Walter) Fernald & B.G. Schubert

Other Commonly Used Names: eastern fringed catchfly

Previously Used Scientific Names: *Silene baldwinii* Nuttall, *Silene catesbaei* Walter

Family: Caryophyllaceae (pink)

Rarity Ranks: G2/S2

State Legal Status: Endangered

Federal Legal Status: Endangered

Federal Wetland Status: none

Description: Perennial **herb**, rooting at nodes and tips of runners, and forming mats. **Stems** erect, to 4 - 16 inches (10 - 40 cm) tall, with long, soft hairs; rising from evergreen **rosettes** that form at the tips of runners. **Leaves** $\frac{3}{4}$ - $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches (2 - 9 cm) long and $\frac{3}{8}$ - 1 inch (1 - 2.5 cm) wide, widest above the middle, opposite, upper surface with raised veins, smooth except for short hairs on the margins and long hairs on the **leaf stalks**. **Flowers** 1 - 2 inches (3 - 5 cm) wide, pink with 5 deeply fringed petals. **Fruit** an oval capsule about $\frac{3}{8}$ inch (1 cm) long, with a toothed opening at the tip.

Similar Species: Many wildflowers have rosettes of leaves connected by creeping stems; vegetatively, fringed campion is distinguished by the small mats of rosettes and the paired, hairy leafstalks. In flower, fringed campion is unmistakable.

Related Rare Species: Carolina catchfly (*Silene caroliniana*, Special Concern) has similar leaves and white to pink flowers, but the petals are not fringed and have only one deep notch. Also see ovate catchfly (*S. ovata*) and royal catchfly (*S. regia*) on this website.

Habitat: Mature hardwood forests with low-acid soils on moist, mid- to lower slopes and small stream terraces.

Life History: Fringed campion reproduces sexually as well as vegetatively by the growth of ground-hugging, horizontal stems (stolons) that form leaf rosettes at their tips; the stolons eventually decay and the rosettes become established as separate, though genetically identical, plants. The showy flowers are probably visited by a variety of insects, such as bees and butterflies, which probe the flowers for nectar and potentially carry pollen to nearby plants. The flowers have evolved a method to discourage self-pollination: the stamens on a given flower mature before that flower's pistils become receptive to pollen. Even so, vegetative reproduction is extremely important to this species. It is likely that most patches of plants consist of a single genetic stock.

Survey Recommendations: Surveys are best conducted during flowering (mid-March–May); although rosettes are evergreen, plants are difficult to find without flowers.

Range: Georgia (Flint, Ocmulgee, and Chattahoochee River drainages) and Florida (Apalachicola River drainage in the Florida Panhandle).

Threats: Logging and clearing of hardwood slopes. Invasion by exotic pest plants. Overbrowsing by deer.

Georgia Conservation Status: About 30 populations are known, with only a few sites protected.

Conservation and Management Recommendations: Avoid logging on slopes and maintain intact hardwood canopy. Avoid fire, raking, and other disturbance to soil and leaf litter. Eradicate exotic pest plants especially Japanese honeysuckle and nandina. Reduce the size of Georgia's deer herd.

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Date Compiled or Updated:

L. Chafin, Aug. 2008: original account

K. Owers, Feb. 2010: added pictures



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