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Common Name: APALACHICOLA WILD INDIGO

Scientific Name: *Baptisia megacarpa* Chapman ex Torrey & Gray

Other Commonly Used Names: bigpod wild indigo

Previously Used Scientific Names: *Baptisia riparia* Larisey

Family: Fabaceae/Leguminosae (pea)

Rarity Ranks: G2/S1

State Legal Status: Special Concern

Federal Legal Status: none

Federal Wetland Status: FAC

Description: **Description:** Perennial **herb** with smooth, stout, erect stems, 2 - 3 feet (60 - 100 cm) tall, with many zigzag branches forming a bushy crown. **Leaves** with 3 oval, blunt-tipped **leaflets**, 1½ - 3½ inches (4 - 9 cm) long. **Flower clusters** 2 - 6 inches (5 - 15 cm) long, drooping, with 2 - 15 flowers. **Flowers** up to ¾ inch long, cream to pale yellow, typical of pea flowers with an upper banner petal and 2 wing petals partly enclosing a keel petal. **Fruit** a drooping, oval, inflated pod, up to 1½ inches (3 - 4 cm) long and 1 inch (2.5 cm) wide, thin-walled, papery, covered with a network of raised veins, becoming brittle and light brown as it dries.

Similar Species: White wild indigo (*Baptisia albescens*) has similar white or cream flowers, but it has widely spreading branches and its pods are leathery, yellowish, and held erect. Prairie wild indigo (*B. alba*) has white flowers, waxy, blue-green stems, and inflated pods that turn black with age.

Related Rare Species: Glade blue wild indigo (*Baptisia minor* var. *aberrans*, Special Concern) occurs in limestone glades in Walker, Catoosa, and Floyd counties. Also see hairy rattleweed (*B. arachnifera*) on this web site.

Habitat: Well drained, sandy ridges in floodplains, stream terraces, and low, hardwood-dominated slopes in the Chattahoochee River drainage.

Life History: Little is known about the life history of Apalachicola wild indigo. As with other *Baptisia* species, it is probably pollinated by bees, which are attracted by the showy banner petal and the presence of nectar at the base of the pistil. Bees are strong and agile enough to force apart the wing and keel petals to reach the nectar and, in doing so, collect pollen on their bodies which is transferred to the next flowers they visit. Legume seeds are rich in nutrients and are often eaten by insects while still in the pod; weevils are known to feed on the seeds of other wild indigo species and may play a role in limiting reproduction in Apalachicola wild indigo. Leaves and stems of all *Baptisia* species contain compounds (quinolizidines) that are poisonous to insects and grazing animals.

Survey Recommendations: Surveys are best conducted during flowering (late April–early June).

Range: Southwest Georgia, southeast Alabama, and adjacent Florida Panhandle.

Threats: Logging on slopes and in bottomlands and floodplains. Stream impoundment. Invasion by exotic pest plants.

Georgia Conservation Status: Eight populations are known, none on conservation land.

Conservation and Management Recommendations: Avoid clearcutting floodplains and forested slopes. Avoid damming rivers and altering floodplain hydrology. Eradicate exotic pest plants such as Japanese honeysuckle and Chinese privet.

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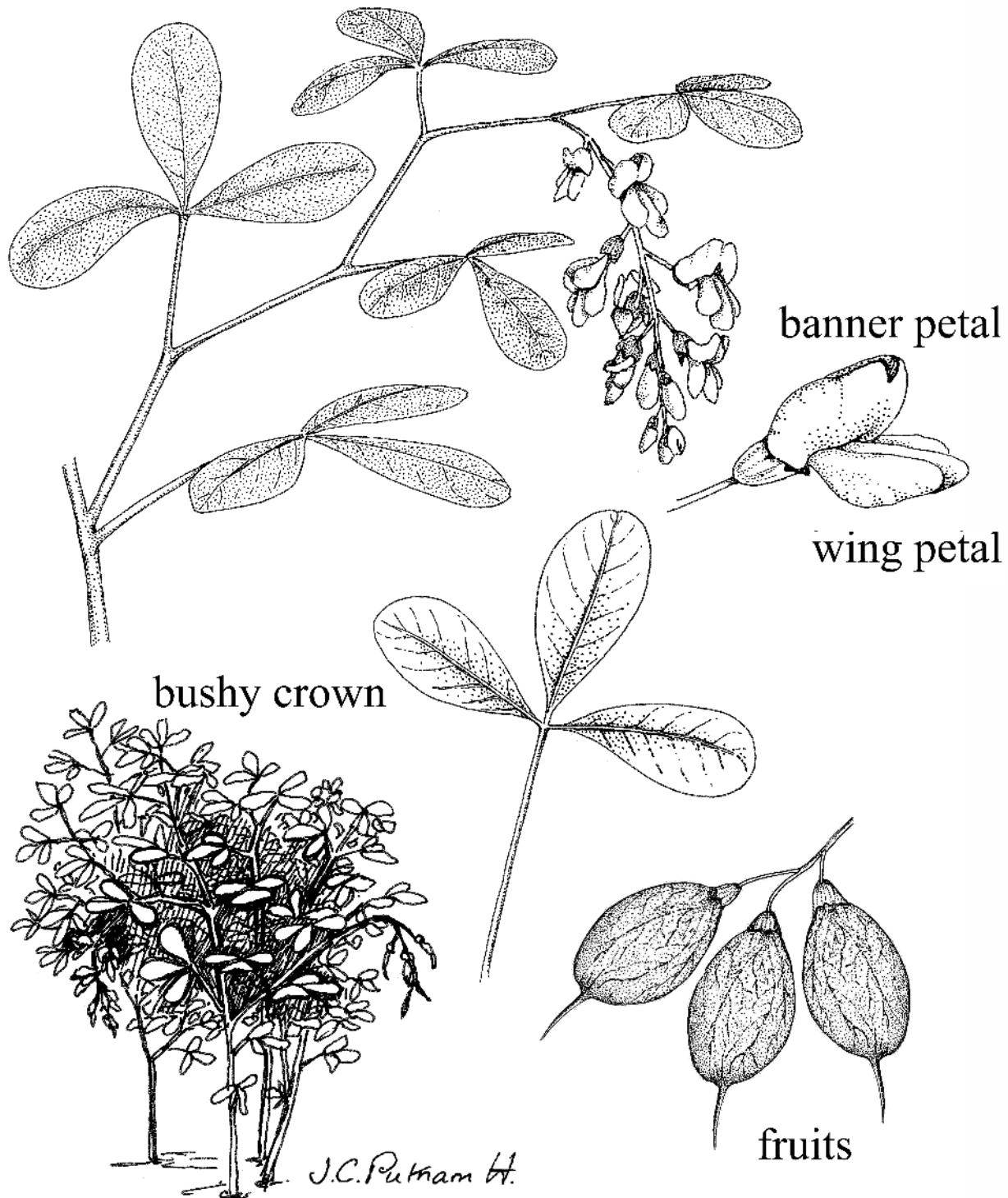
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Date Compiled or Updated:

L. Chafin, Feb. 2008: original account

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

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Baptisia megacarpa





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Inflorescence