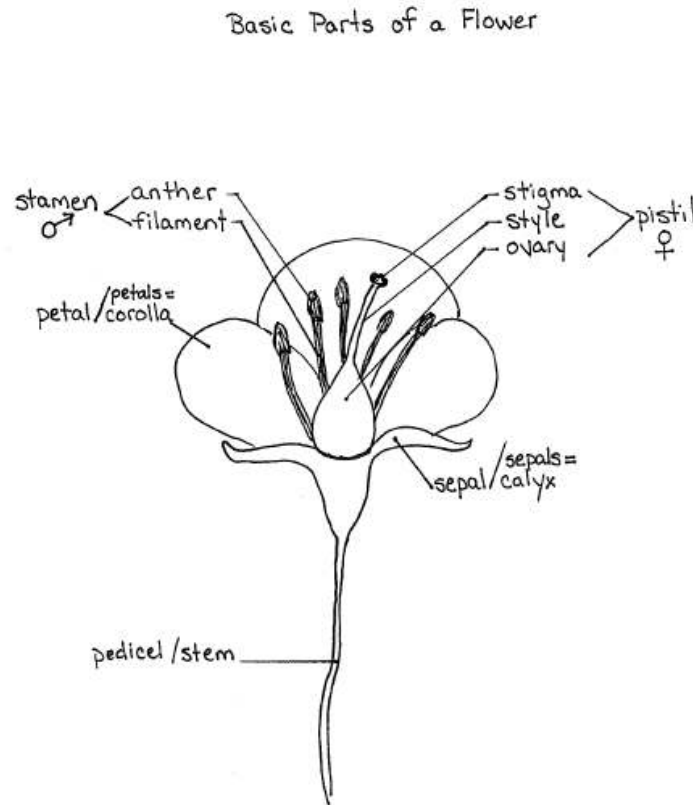


Taxonomic Structures and Glossary of Terms Referenced in Georgia's Rare Plant Profiles



Glossary of Terms

Achene. A small, dry, fruit that opens irregularly and contains a single seed attached at one point to the ovary wall (e.g., a sunflower "seed").

Acute. An angle less than 90° ; usually applied to the apex of a leaf or other flattened organ.

Alternate. Borne singly at each level of an axis, contrasted with opposite and whorled.

Angled. Refers to a 3-dimensional form with angles in cross section (e.g., most wooden pencils are 6-angled).

Annual. Lasting a single year; opposite of perennial.

Anther. The part of the stamen that produces pollen, usually borne on a stalk (filament).

Apical. At or toward the tip (apex) of an organ or other structure.

Axil. The upper angle between a leaf (or branch) and the stem.

Axillary. At or from one or more axils.

Axis (plural Axes). The central stem along which organs or their parts are attached, or the longitudinal centerline of a structure.

Berry. A fleshy fruit developing from a single pistil and containing multiple seeds (e.g., a tomato or blueberry).

Bract. A small, leaf like organ produced below a flower or an inflorescence.

Blade. The flat part of a leaf.

Calyx. The outermost whorl of floral parts (sepals), above or internal to any bracts, usually green in contrast to the usually colored corolla.

Calyx lobes. When sepals are united at their bases, the cleft upper portion of the calyx.

Calyx tube. When sepals are united at their bases, the fused lower portion of the calyx.

Capsule. A fruit that is dry at maturity, formed from a compound pistil, and sheds its seeds in a regular fashion, such as by splitting open along a line (e.g., okra) or through a pore (e.g., poppy).

Clasping. The condition where the base of a leaf (or a leafstalk) partly surrounds the stem.

Composite. A compound flower composed of many smaller flowers.

Cordate. Heart-shaped in outline; used also to indicate that the base of a leaf has a rounded notch at the point of attachment to the leafstalk or stem.

Corolla. The whorl of floral parts (petals) just interior relative to the calyx; usually not green; sometimes absent.

Corolla lobes. When petals are united at their bases, the cleft upper portion of the corolla.

Corolla tube. When petals are united at their bases, the fused lower portion of the corolla.

Cyme. A type of inflorescence that is broader than long, with the central flower maturing first.

Deciduous. Dropping off all leaves annually. Contrasted with evergreen.

Disjunct. Growing within an area that is separated by a considerable distance from the main portion of a taxon's range.

Disk. The round, central portion of the flower head in those plants which have both ray flowers and disk flowers (family Asteraceae); consists of disk flowers and any bracts (chaff) that subtend them.

Disk flower. A type of flower found in the family Asteraceae; it is more or less tubular with short (usually), radially arranged corolla-lobes.

Drupe. A type of fleshy or pulpy fruit containing a single stone; such as olive, peach, or cherry.

Ellipsoid. Having an elliptical shape in long section and circular in cross-section (a jelly bean is broadly ellipsoid).

Elliptic. Tapering gradually and equally at both ends.

Endemic. Restricted (or nearly so) to a particular geographic area or habitat.

Entire. Continuous, not toothed, notched, or divided.

Evergreen. Keeping some live leaves year around. Contrasted with deciduous.

Exotic. Not naturally occurring in a given area. May be introduced or have escaped from somewhere else; not native (non-native).

Federal Wetland Status. A national system for identifying the probability of a plant occurring in a wetland environment:

OBL – Obligate Wetland: usually occurring in wetlands.

FACW – Facultative Wetland: usually in wetlands, but occasionally found in non-wetlands.

FAC – Facultative: equally likely on wetlands/non-wetlands.

FACU – Facultative Upland: usually on non-wetlands, but occasionally found in wetlands.

UPL – Obligate Upland: usually occurring in non-wetlands.

Filament. The stalk part of the stamen that supports the pollen bearing anther.

Fruit. A ripened ovary and any structures adhering to it at maturity (includes such "vegetables" as string beans and squash).

Habit. The characteristic growth form and appearance of a plant.

Head. A dense, short, cluster of short-stalked or stalkless flowers (e.g., clover); the unit inflorescence of a composite (family Asteraceae), composed of ray and/or disk flowers and the bracts associated with them.

Herb. A plant without over-wintering aboveground stems; including both annuals and those perennials that die back to the ground at the end of each growing season.

Herbaceous. With the characteristics of an herb.

Inflorescence. The portion of the plant producing flowers and fruits.

Lanceolate. Shaped like a lance head; much longer than broad and broader in the lower half than in the upper.

Leaflet. An individual segment of a divided leaf, distinguishable from an individual leaf because the latter develops from a single bud; thus all the leaflets of an individual leaf develop from a common bud.

Ligule. A straplike structure that occurs at the base of the leaf, also the single strap-shaped petal of some flowers.

Linear. Long, narrow, and of uniform width.

Lobe. A segment of an organ (leaf, bract, calyx, corolla, etc.) that is not divided all the way to the axis on which it is borne.

Margin. The edge of a leaf.

Native. Naturally occurring in a given area, not exotic.

Ob lanceolate. Inverted lanceolate: much longer than broad, and broader in the upper half than in the lower.

Oblong. Much longer than broad, and with nearly parallel sides.

Obovate. Inverted ovate: in outline somewhat like a hen's egg, the narrower end downward.

Obovoid. Inverted ovoid: shaped somewhat like a hen's egg, and with the narrower end at the point of attachment.

Opposite. Arranged in pairs, each unit (e.g., leaf, leaflet, or bract) directly across from the other on the axis, contrasted with alternate or whorled.

Ovary. The enlarged part of the pistil that contains the ovules, which are potential (post-fertilization) seeds.

Ovate. In outline somewhat like a hen's egg, the broader end downward.

Ovoid. Shaped somewhat like a hen's egg, and with the broader end at the point of attachment.

Panicle. A compound raceme, i.e. with a branched axis.

Perennial. With a normal life span of three or more years.

Petal. An individual segment of the corolla.

Petiole. The stalk of a leaf.

Pinnate. With divisions arranged on either side of a common axis.

Pistil. The female organ of a flower, consisting (in a **simple pistil**) of an ovary and stigma and (usually) a style between; when two or more simple pistils are fused to some degree, they form a **compound pistil**.

Raceme. An inflorescence that is longer than broad with an unbranched axis, and flowering beginning from its base and progressing to the apex. Flowers (at least some of them) are individually stalked.

Ray (ray-flower). A specialized flower (found in many members of the family Asteraceae) in which the corolla is strap-like (the so-called "petals" of a daisy).

Rhizome. A horizontal stem, at least partially buried, that produces roots as well as leaves or aerial stems.

Rosette. A radially arranged cluster of leaves borne close together at or near ground level.

Scale. A small, thin, flattened structure, usually more or less translucent.

Sepal. An individual segment of the calyx.

Sheath. The lower part of a grass leaf that hugs the stem.

Simple. Undivided and unbranched; opposite of compound.

Spike. An inflorescence that is longer than broad, with an unbranched axis, with flowering beginning from its base and progressing to the apex, and none of the flowers stalked.

Sporangium. An organ in which spores are produced.

Stamen. The male, pollen-bearing organ of the flower, (usually) consisting of an anther and filament.

Stigma. The pollen-receptive apical portion of the pistil.

Style. A narrowed, elongated portion of a pistil between the ovary and the stigma.

Subtend. To be positioned beneath and in close proximity; flowers are often subtended by bracts.

Taxon (plural Taxa). Any of the hierarchical units of classification; e.g. Family, Genus, Species.

Tepal. Term used for both sepals and petals when (for example in some lilies) these are essentially identical in form and color.

Umbel. A more or less flat- or round-topped inflorescence in which all of the flowers are on stalks that arise from approximately the same point on the axis.

Whorl. Three or more units that are arranged radially at the same level of an axis, like the spokes of a wheel.

Wing. A flattened extension of a structure, most often of a seed or stem.

An excellent reference for the above terms (and many more) is:

Harris, J.G. and M.W. Harris. 1994. *Plant Identification Terminology: An Illustrated Glossary*. Spring Lake, UT: Spring Lake Publishing.

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