



Common Name: LITTLE RIVER BLACK-EYED SUSAN

Scientific Name: *Rudbeckia heliopsidis* Torrey & Gray

Other Commonly Used Names: sun-facing coneflower

Previously Used Scientific Names: none

Family: Asteraceae/Compositae (aster)

Rarity Ranks: G2/S1

State Legal Status: Threatened

Federal Legal Status: none

Federal Wetland Status: none

Description: Perennial **herb** with hairy, many-branched stems, 2 - 4 feet (60 - 120 cm) tall.

Leaves $2\frac{3}{8}$ - 8 inches (6 - 20 cm) long and $\frac{3}{4}$ - 2 inches (2 - 5 cm) wide, alternate, oval, with rounded bases and pointed tips, smooth to roughly hairy surfaces, and toothed margins (occasionally without teeth); basal leaves have long leaf stalks, stem leaves have shorter stalks.

Flower heads consist of a raised, rounded, purplish-brown disk, $\frac{3}{8}$ - $\frac{5}{8}$ inch (1 - 1.5 cm) wide;

6 - 12 yellow ray flowers, $\frac{1}{2}$ - $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch (1.5 - 3 cm) long; a whorl of gland-dotted bracts surrounding the base of the head; and thin, very hairy scales (**chaff**), less than $\frac{1}{16}$ inch (0.15 mm) long, attached near the base of each disk flower. **Fruits** $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (3 mm) long, dry, seedlike.

Similar Species: Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) is a common, widespread species with very hairy stems, leaves, and bracts. Its deep yellow ray flowers are tinged with orange on the lower half and are $\frac{1}{2}$ - $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches (1.5 - 4.5 cm) long. Orange coneflower (*Rudbeckia fulgida*) also resembles Little River black-eyed Susan; it grows in wet pine savannas or in deep sands along streams. Its chaff is smooth or only slightly hairy.

Related Rare Species: Large-flowered coneflower (*Rudbeckia grandiflora*, Special Concern) occurs on limestone glades in Catoosa County. It has thick, hairy, lance-shaped basal leaves up to 10 inches (25 cm) long and 4 inches (10 cm) wide. The ray flowers are yellow, drooping, and up to 2 inches (5 cm) long; the disk is dark brown, flat-topped, and raised as much as 1 inch (2.5 cm) above the rays.

Habitat: Limestone or sandstone outcrops and nearby streamsides, Coosa Valley prairies, and roadsides and rights-of-way through these habitats; requires openings created by fire, stream scouring, or other clearing.

Life History: Little River black-eyed Susan is a perennial herb that reproduces sexually as well as vegetatively by producing new plants at the tips of spreading underground stems. There is no information about pollination of Little River black-eyed Susan; most members of this genus are pollinated by a variety of bees, butterflies, and flies and require cross-pollination to set seed. Seeds are dispersed by gravity, flowing water, and small animals.

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

Range: Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia.

Threats: Conversion of habitat to pine plantations or developments; use of herbicides in rights-of-way; disruption of natural flooding cycles in streams; fire suppression in prairies; overgrowth of aggressive weedy competitors.

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

Conservation and Management Recommendations: Use prescribed fire or hand-clearing to remove competing vegetation. Avoid clearcutting and other mechanical disturbances to the ground cover. Avoid use of herbicides in highway rights-of-way. Avoid damming streams.

Selected References:

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Author of Species Account: Linda G. Chafin

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L. Chafin, Aug. 2008: original account

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