

Common Name: OCMULGEE SKULLCAP

Scientific Name: Scutellaria ocmulgee Small

Other Commonly Used Names: none

Previously Used Scientific Names: none

Family: Lamiaceae/Labiatae (mint)

Rarity Ranks: G2/S2

State Legal Status: Threatened

Federal Legal Status: none

Federal Wetland Status: FACW

Description: Perennial **herb** with 4-sided **stems** 16 - 32 inches (40 - 80 cm) tall; upper stem with 2 types of hairs: (1) pointed, upwardly-curved hairs, and (2) longer, straight, knob-tipped hairs (10x hand lens is needed to see hairs). **Leaves** up to 3 inches long, opposite, with rounded teeth and softly hairy lower surfaces; lower leaves heart-shaped with rounded bases; upper and mid-stem leaves oblong to oval with squared-off or tapered bases. **Leaf stalks** of mid- and lower stem about half as long as the leaves. **Flowers** ¾ - 1 inch (1.8 - 2.3 cm) long, with an erect tube, hood-like upper lip, and down-curved, white-striped lower lip; blue-violet and faintly fragrant. A

small green cup (calyx), with a bump on the upper side, surrounds the base of the flower and the maturing fruit. Fruits consist of 4 tiny nutlets enclosed by the calyx.

Similar Species: Several skullcaps occur in Ocmulgee skullcap habitat, but none have **both** pointed hairs **and** knob-tipped hairs on the upper stem. Hairy skullcap (*Scutellaria elliptica*) leaves are rough-hairy, and its flowers are usually less than ³/₄ inch (1 cm) long. Heart-leaved skullcap (*S. ovata*) has only long, down-curved hairs on the upper stem.

Related Rare Species: See Altamaha skullcap (*Scutellaria altamaha*), large-flowered skullcap (*Scutellaria montana*), and showy skullcap (*Scutellaria serrata*) on this website. Five other species of skullcap are of Special Concern in Georgia: *S. arenicola*, *S. leonardii*, *S. mellichampii*, *S. nervosa*, and *S. saxatilis*.

Habitat: Moist hardwood forests on stream terraces, slopes, and bluffs, usually with a northern or eastern aspect and in calcium-rich soils along the Oconee, Ocmulgee, and Savannah Rivers and their tributaries.

Life History: Ocmulgee is a perennial herb that reproduces sexually; little else is known about the life history of this species. Other skullcap species are typically pollinated by long-tongued bees and moths; wasps are known to cut holes in the base of some skullcap flower tubes and suck out nectar without carrying out the pollination that bees do.

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

Range: Georgia and South Carolina.

Threats: Destruction of habitat by logging and clearing, especially for developments on river bluffs. Invasion by exotic pest plant species such as Japanese honeysuckle, Chinese privet, and autumn olive. Overbrowsing by deer.

Georgia Conservation Status: Nineteen populations are known, but only 3 of these occur on public lands.

Conservation and Management Recommendations: Prevent clearcutting and development on river bluffs and stream terraces. Eradicate exotic pest species such as wild hogs, Japanese honeysuckle, Chinese privet, and autumn olive. Limit the size of Georgia's deer population.

Selected References:

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