
**Common Name: PARROT PITCHERPLANT**

**Scientific Name:** *Sarracenia psittacina* Michaux

**Other Commonly Used Names:** none

**Previously Used Scientific Names:** none

**Family:** Sarraceniaceae

**Rarity Ranks:** G4/S2S3

**State Legal Status:** Threatened

**Federal Legal Status:** none

**Federal Wetland Status:** OBL

**Description:** Perennial **herb** with leaves modified into tubular pitchers that are clustered into a rosette with outer whorl of pitchers typically resting on the ground, inner pitchers semi-erect. **Pitchers** 3 - 12 inches (8 - 30 cm) long, with a large wing on the upper side and a deeply curved and inflated **hood**; pitchers are green near the base and reddish near the top, with whitish,

translucent patches on the upper pitcher and the hood. **Flower stalk** 6 - 14 inches (15 - 35 cm) tall, leafless. **Flower** solitary with 5 drooping, maroon **petals**, 1 - 1½ inches (3 - 4 cm) long; 5 **sepals**, maroon on the outside and green on the inside; and a yellow-green, umbrella-shaped **style disk** in the center of the flower. Sepals and style disk persist long after the petals fall, and the **fruit** – a round, warty capsule about ¾ inch (1.5 - 2 cm) wide – develops.

**Similar and Related Rare Species:** All seven of Georgia's pitcherplants are state-protected and included on this web site: yellow trumpets (*Sarracenia flava*), hooded pitcherplant (*S. minor*), white-top pitcherplant (*S. leucophylla*), green pitcherplant (*S. oreophila*), parrot pitcherplant (*S. psittacina*), purple pitcherplant (*Sarracenia purpurea*), and sweet pitcherplant (*S. rubra*).

**Habitat:** Wet savannas and pine flatwoods, seepage slopes, and bogs.

**Life History:** Pitcherplants capture and digest insects and other small animals in their pitchers. Nectar is produced by glands around the top of the pitcher, luring animals to the opening with its sweet smell. Stiff, down-pointing hairs line the pitcher, encouraging the animals to slide in and impeding their escape. The whitish, translucent patches on the upper pitcher and the hood further confuse the insects after they have entered the pitcher. Enzymes dissolved in water in the base of the pitcher digest the animals, making nutrients, especially nitrogen, available for absorption by the plant. (Soils of bogs and other permanently saturated wetlands are typically low in nitrogen.) The small opening leading into the inflated hood of the parrot pitcherplant has led some observers to consider this plant's trap more of a "lobster pot" than the typical "pitfall trap" of other pitcherplants. These traps work underwater, catching aquatic insects, an adaptation to the occasionally flooded habitat of the parrot pitcherplant.
Pitcherplants reproduce sexually and also vegetatively by the spread of underground stems (rhizomes). They usually reach 4 - 5 years old before they flower and may live to be 20 - 30 years old. The unusual shape of their flowers, with drooping petals and umbrella-like style disk, promotes cross-pollination by insects. When an insect, usually a bee, pushes its way past the petals to reach the nectar and pollen on the interior of the flower, it brushes against one of the stigmas, which are at the pointed tips of the "umbrella," and deposits pollen gathered from a previously visited flower. Once inside the petals, it picks up pollen from the anthers and from the inner surface of the umbrella and then carries it to the next visited flower, usually avoiding the stigmas as it leaves the flower. Parrot pitcherplant blooms at the same time the pitchers appear in the spring; since it would be a disadvantage to the plant to "eat" its pollinators, its flowers are held on tall stalks well above the pitchers.

**Survey Recommendations:** Surveys are best conducted during flowering (March–May) since the small clusters of pitchers are easily overlooked.

**Range:** Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

**Threats:** Conversion of habitat to pine plantations, pastures, and developments. Ditching and draining of wetlands. Fire suppression, canopy closure, and encroachment by woody plants. Poaching. Digging by feral hogs. Off-road vehicle traffic.

**Georgia Conservation Status:** Parrot pitcherplant is one of the more common of Georgia's pitcherplants, historically occurring in at least 26 counties. It was originally added to the state protection list because of the threat of poaching and commercial exploitation. However, its habitat has since been widely destroyed and many of the older populations are now gone. Only a few populations occur on conservation lands.

**Conservation and Management Recommendations:** Avoid ditching, draining, mechanical clearing, and other soil-compacting activity. Apply prescribed fire every 2 - 3 years. Limit access to sites to prevent poaching and off-road vehicle traffic. Eradicate feral hogs.

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