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Common Name: GEORGIA ST. JOHN'S-WORT

Scientific Name: *Hypericum erythraeae*

Other Commonly Used Names: sparse-leaved St. John's-wort

Previously Used Scientific Names: *Bathrys erythraeae* Spach

Family: Clusiaceae (mangosteen) or Hypericaceae/Guttiferae (St. John's-wort)

Rarity Ranks: G2/S2

State Legal Status: Special Concern

Federal Legal Status: none

Federal Wetland Status: none

Description: Perennial **herb** 16 - 39 inches (40 - 100 cm) tall. **Stems** erect, winged, four-sided, reddish-brown and with shredding bark near the base, and with spongy tissue at the base, unbranched except for flowering branches. **Leaves** about $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ inch (0.5 - 2 cm) long and $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (0.5 - 1.5 cm) wide, mostly 4 - 6 times longer than wide, opposite, oval to lance-shaped, with pointed tips, a conspicuous midvein and no leaf stalk, distinctly and gradually reduced in size upward, curved upwards and held closely to the stem; the leaf margins are not inrolled, and glandular dots are few and inconspicuous (except when dried, when they are conspicuous on the lower leaf surface). **Flower cluster** held at the top of the stem, with numerous forking branches and few leaves. **Flowers** $\frac{3}{8}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ inch (1 - 2 cm) wide with 5 dark yellow **petals**, each with wavy margins and a single large tooth. Flowers also include 50 - 80 **stamens**, 3 **styles**, and 5 green, pointed, lance-shaped **sepals** about $\frac{3}{16}$ inch (3.5 - 4.5 mm) long and $\frac{1}{16}$ inch (0.7 - 1.2 mm) wide that surround the underside of the flower. **Fruit** an oval capsule about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (3 - 4.5 mm) long (not including the persistent styles that form a short beak on the fruit).

Similar Species: Georgia St. John's-wort resembles several other herbaceous species of St. John's-wort that occur in wetlands; it is distinguished by its height (up to 3 feet tall), the spongy tissue at the base of the stem, its pointed leaf tips, and by the large number of stamens. The leaves of coppery St. John's-wort (*Hypericum denticulatum*) are conspicuously gland-dotted on both surfaces; Georgia St. John's-wort leaves have inconspicuous dots (except when dried, when they are conspicuous on the lower leaf surface).

Related Rare Species: Two Special Concern species, glade St. John's-wort (*Hypericum dolabrifforme*) and barrens St. John's-wort (*H. sphaerocarpum*), grow on limestone glades in northwest Georgia; both are slender, erect shrubs to 18 inches (45 cm) tall. Also see bog St. John's-wort (*H. adpressum*) and Blue Ridge St. John's-wort (*Hypericum buckleii*) on this website.

Habitat: Pitcherplant bogs, wet savannas, and open roadside ditches and powerline rights-of-way through these habitats.

Life History: Georgia St. John's-wort is a perennial herb that reproduces sexually. No studies of its reproductive biology have been carried out, but its flowers are likely pollinated by bees that are attracted to its showy flowers and abundant pollen since, like most members of this genus, bog St. John's-wort probably does not produce nectar. It depends on insect visitors to effect cross-pollination in order to produce fruit.

Survey Recommendations: Surveys are best conducted during flowering (June–September).

Range: Coastal Plain of southeastern Georgia and, historically, southern coastal of South Carolina.

Threats: Conversion of habitat to pine plantations, pastures, and developments. Ditching and draining of bogs and savannas. Fire suppression and competition from trees and shrubs.

Georgia Conservation Status: Nine populations of Georgia St. John's-wort are known, none on conservation land.

Conservation and Management Recommendations: Protect bogs and savannas from clearcutting, development, and ditching and draining. Apply prescribed fire every 2 - 3 years during the growing season.

Selected References:

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Spach, M.E. 1836. *Bathrys erythraeae*. Historie naturelle des vegetaux: phanerogames 5: 452-453.

Weakley, A.S. 2008. Flora of the Carolinas, Virginia, Georgia, northern Florida, and surrounding areas. University of North Carolina Herbarium, Chapel Hill.

<http://www.herbarium.unc.edu/flora.htm>

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L. Chafin, Jan. 2009: original account

K. Owers, Feb. 2010: added pictures



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