



Common Name: NIGHT-BLOOMING WILD PETUNIA

Scientific Name: *Ruellia noctiflora* (Nees) A. Gray

Other Commonly Used Names: night-flowering wild petunia

Previously Used Scientific Names: *Ruellia tubiflora* Leconte

Family: Acanthaceae (wild petunia)

Rarity Ranks: G2/SH

State Legal Status: Special Concern

Federal Legal Status: none

Federal Wetland Status: FACW

Description: Perennial **herb** with slender, hairy, purplish stems 12 -16 inches (30 - 40 cm) tall. **Leaves** 1 - 2¾ inches (3 - 7 cm) long, opposite, oval with pointed tips, and very short or no leaf stalks. **Flowers** up to 4 inches (10 cm) across, glistening white, with 5 spreading **petals**; the **tube and throat** are more than 3 inches (8 - 10 cm) long; **sepals** ½ - 1 inch (1.6 - 2.8 cm) long, very narrow, persisting around the base of the fruit as it develops. **Flowers** open at night then fall off by mid-morning. **Fruit** an oval capsule, about ¾ inch (2 cm) long, with a long, persistent style.

Similar Species: No other plants in Georgia's Coastal Plain flatwoods have large, white, petunia-like flowers and opposite leaves. Other wild petunia species have smaller, purple flowers. Some morning-glories have large, white flowers; these are all vines with alternate leaves.

Related Rare Species: See pineland wild petunia (*Ruellia pinetorum*) on this website.

Habitat: Moist to wet flatwoods and savannas, low wet hammocks.

Life History: Night-blooming wild petunia is a perennial herb that reproduces sexually. Its flowers open in the evening then shrivel and drop off by the following morning; during the night, they are pollinated by hawkmoths whose long tongues probe the three-inch flower tubes for nectar produced by a ring of nectaries that encircle the base of the ovary.

Survey Recommendations: Surveys are best conducted during flowering (May–August).

Range: Georgia, South Carolina, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana,

Threats: Fire suppression, logging and other clearing, conversion of habitat to pine plantations and developments, ditching and draining wetlands, overbrowsing by deer.

Georgia Conservation Status: Night-flowering wild petunia has not been seen in Georgia since 1963.

Conservation and Management Recommendations: Burn pine flatwoods and seepage slopes every 2 - 3 years. Avoid soil-disturbing activities such as plowing fire lanes and bedding. Avoid clearcutting floodplains and other forested wetlands. Reduce the size of Georgia's deer herd.

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L. Chafin, Aug. 2008: original account

K. Owers, Feb. 2010: added pictures

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