



Common Name: GOLDENSEAL

Scientific Name: *Hydrastis canadensis* Linnaeus

Other Commonly Used Names: none

Previously Used Scientific Names: none

Family: Ranunculaceae (buttercup) or Hydrastidaceae (goldenseal)

Rarity Ranks: G4/S2

State Legal Status: Endangered

Federal Legal Status: none

Federal Wetland Status: none

Description: Perennial **herb**, 6 - 20 inches (15 - 50 cm) tall, forming colonies from a stout, underground stem. Aboveground **stems** erect, hairy, often golden-yellow at the base and bearing 1 - 2 leaves at the top. **Leaves** up to 4 inches (3 - 10 cm) wide during flowering, expanding to 10 inches (25 cm) wide when mature, with 3 - 7 pointed, toothed lobes and hairy, wrinkled surfaces. **Flowers** up to ¾ inch (1.8 cm) across, solitary on hairy stalks up to 1½ inches (3.8 cm) long that arise at the base of one of the leaves; flowers with no **petals** and many showy, white **stamens**. **Fruit** a raspberry-like cluster of red berries, about ½ inch (1.5 cm) wide.

Similar Species: Tassel-rue (*Trautvetteria caroliniensis*) has deeply lobed leaves and flowers similar to goldenseal, but its stems and leaves are smooth and hairless, and the flowers are in branched clusters.

Related Rare Species: None in Georgia.

Habitat: Moist, deciduous hardwood forests with neutral or basic soils over bedrock that is high in calcium or magnesium. Goldenseal thrives best under a somewhat patchily open canopy.

Life History: Goldenseal is a perennial herb that reproduces sexually as well as vegetatively by spread of its rhizomes, which produce buds that develop into stems the following year. Vegetative spread results in the formation of large colonies of genetically similar plants. Goldenseal is pollinated by bees and syrphid flies. Its bright red, prominently displayed fruits are attractive to animals, primarily birds, who disperse the seeds. The rhizomes of goldenseal contain several highly active alkaloids and have been used to treat a variety of ailments; digging by medicinal plant collectors seriously threatens the survival of this species.

Survey Recommendations: Surveys are best conducted during flowering (late March–late April) and fruiting (May–June).

Range: Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, north to Vermont and Ontario, west to Kansas and Oklahoma. Goldenseal is rare throughout most of its range due to loss of habitat and collecting for medicinal uses.

Threats: Conversion of habitat to pine plantations and developments; logging and other mechanical clearing; invasion by exotic pest plants; harvesting by medicinal plant diggers.

Georgia Conservation Status: About 10 populations are known, most on national forest or state park lands; all are vulnerable to plant poaching.

Conservation and Management Recommendations: Avoid logging, clearing, and other mechanical disturbances in hardwood forests. Eradicate exotic pest plants. Prosecute plant poachers.

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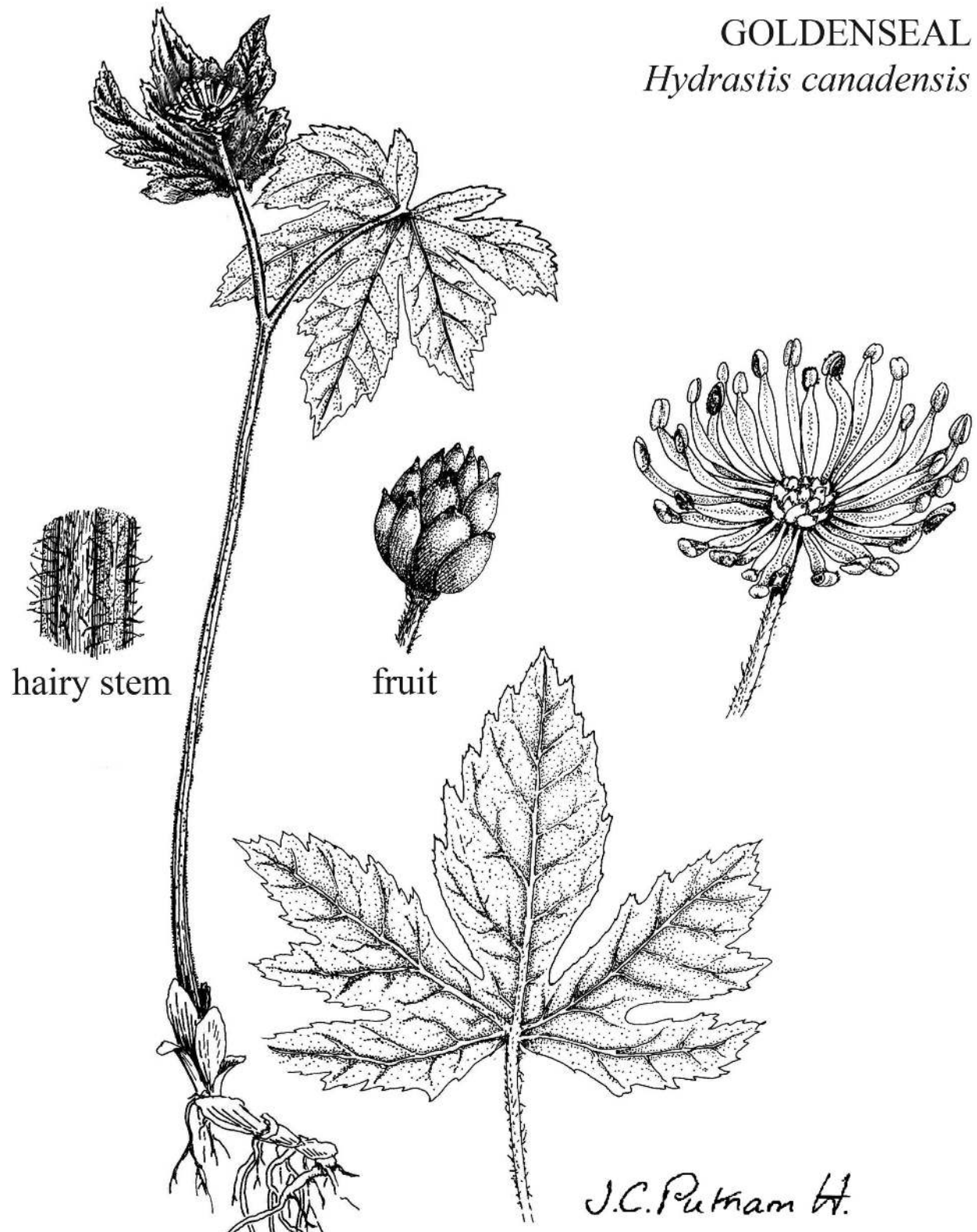
Author of species account: Linda G. Chafin

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L. Chafin, Mar. 2007: original account

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GOLDENSEAL
Hydrastis canadensis





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