

Virginia Spiraea

Spiraea virginiana

Description

The Virginia spiraea is found in the Appalachian Plateaus or the southern Blue Ridge Mountains in Alabama, Ohio, West Virginia, Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Georgia. It no longer occurs in Pennsylvania. This plant was first discovered in Virginia in 1985. Most of the existing populations consist of only a few clumps. Mature plants reach a height of three to ten feet. Young stems are greenish-yellow to dark brown and mature stems are dark gray. The roots form a complex system. The creamy white flowers are in tightly packed bunches.

Life History

Virginia spiraea is found along scoured banks of high gradient streams or on meander scrolls, point bars, natural levees, and braided features of lower stream reaches. Soils are sandy, silty, or clay and elevation range is 1000-2400 feet. If the roots are exposed, they will give rise to upright stems. Seed production is sporadic and seedlings have never been documented in the wild. Sexual reproduction is rare indicating the genetic variability within and probably between stream occurrences is low. Few mature seeds and no seedlings have been observed. Little population expansion has been reported. Late summer and fall flower bunches often dry and persist during the winter, making field identification possible. Fragmentation by erosion or scour and subsequent downstream travel may be the most important means of dispersal for this species. The most important factor in maintaining this plant seems to be removal of woody competition by erosion. Scour must be sufficient to remove woody trees and vines without washing out the horizontal root.

Conservation

The Virginia spiraea was federally listed as a threatened species on July 16, 1990. Impoundments are a threat to this species because they inundate habitat and stabilize downstream water flow. Other threats include road maintenance, beaver damage, offroad vehicle use, deer browse, nonnative plant species, chemical spills, and pollution. Random events are so significant in the life cycle of this species that a list of additional threats would be lengthy and specifically associated with a particular part of the life cycle.

What you can do to help

If you find a plant that appears to be the Virginia spiraea, take note of the location and photograph the plant, if possible. Please do not remove the plant!

Contact one of the following agencies for assistance:
Virginia Department of Agriculture
and Consumer Services
Office of Plant Protection
P.O. Box 1163
Richmond, Virginia 23209
804/786 3515

Virginia Department of
Conservation and Recreation
Division of Natural Heritage
217 Governor Street, 3rd Floor
Richmond, Virginia 23219
804/786 7951

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Virginia Field Office
6669 Short Lane
Gloucester, Virginia 23061
804/693 6694

References

Ogle, D. 1991. Virginia spiraea. Pages 117-119 in K. Terwilliger, ed.



Ron Lance/NC Arboretum

Virginia's Endangered Species, Proceedings of a Symposium. McDonald and Woodward Publishing Company, Blacksburg, Virginia.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1992. Virginia spiraea (*Spiraea virginiana* Britton) recovery plan. Newton Corner, Massachusetts.

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Virginia Field Office
6669 Short Lane
Gloucester, Virginia 23061
804/693 6694**

**Federal Relay Service
for the deaf and hard-of-hearing
1 800/877 8339**

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1 800/344 WILD
<http://www.fws.gov>**

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