

Virginia spiraea

Spiraea virginiana



Virginia spiraea, USFWS

Status: Threatened

Description: Virginia spiraea is a perennial shrub with many branches. It grows 3 to 10 feet tall. Its alternate leaves are singletooth serrated; 1 to 6 inches long and 1 to 2 inches wide; occasionally curved; and have a narrow, moderately tapered base. The leaves are also darker green above than below. The plant produces flowers that are yellowish green to pale white, with stamens twice the length of the sepal. It blooms from late May to late July, but flower production is sparse and does not begin until after the first year of establishment. Virginia spiraea has a clonal root system that can fragment and produce more plants. This form of vegetative reproduction is more common than flower pollination and seed dispersal in this species.

Habitat: Virginia spiraea occurs along rivers and streams and relies on periodic disturbances, such as high-velocity scouring floods, which eliminate competition from trees and

other woody vegetation. However, if the frequency and intensity of these floods is too great, the plant may become dislodged and wash downstream into less suitable habitat.

Range: Virginia spiraea is a Southern Appalachian species, with isolated populations found in the mountain regions of Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, Ohio, and West Virginia.

Threats: Due to its specific habitat requirements, Virginia spiraea is vulnerable to alterations of streamflow patterns. Impoundments, road construction, unmanaged recreational use of river corridors, industrial development, lack of watershed management, and uncontrolled development of river corridors have already threatened and exterminated several populations of this species. Another threat to Virginia spiraea is competition from exotic invasive plants.

Listing: Threatened, June 15, 1990. 55 FR 24241 24247

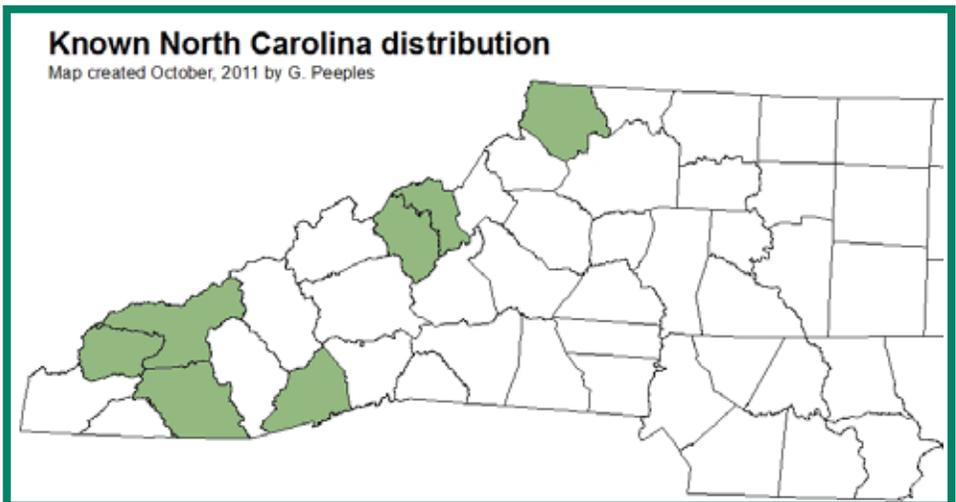
Critical habitat: None designated

Why should we be concerned about the loss of species? Extinction is a natural process that has been occurring

since long before the appearance of humans. Normally, new species develop through a process known as speciation, at about the same rate other species become extinct. However, because of air and water pollution, forest clearing, loss of wetlands, and other man-induced environmental changes, extinctions are now occurring at a rate that far exceeds the speciation rate.

All living things are part of a complex and interconnected network. We depend on the diversity of plant and animal life for our recreation, nourishment, many of our lifesaving medicines, and the ecological functions they provide. One-quarter of all the prescriptions written in the United States today contain chemicals that were originally discovered in plants and animals. Industry and agriculture are increasingly making use of wild plants, seeking out the remaining wild strain of many common crops, such as wheat and corn, to produce new hybrids that are more resistant to disease, pests, and marginal climatic conditions. Our food crops depend on insects and other animals for pollination.

Healthy forests clean the air and provide oxygen for us to breathe. Wetlands clean water and help minimize the impacts of floods. These services are the foundation of life and



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depend on a diversity of plants and animals working in concert. Each time a species disappears, we lose not only those benefits we know it provided but other benefits that we have yet to realize.

What you can do to help

Tread lightly and stay on designated trails.

Visit arboretums, botanical gardens, and parks and learn all you can about endangered plants and the causes of their declines.

Don't collect or buy plants collected from wild populations.

Participate in the protection of our remaining wild lands and the restoration of damaged ecosystems.

Support wetland protection efforts at local, state, and national levels.

Establish and maintain forested stream-side buffers. Several federal, state, and private programs are available to assist landowners, both technically and financially, with restoring and protecting stream-side buffers and eroding streams.

Implement and maintain measures for controlling erosion and storm water during and after land-clearing and disturbance activities. Excess soil in our streams from erosion is one of the greatest water pollution problems we have today.

Be careful with the use and disposal of fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemicals. Remember, what you put on your land or dump down the drain may eventually wind up in nearby water.

Support local, state and national clean water legislation.

Report illegal dumping activities, erosion, and sedimentation problems. These activities affect the quality of our water, for drinking, fishing, and swimming.

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