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Conserving South Carolina's At-Risk Species: *Species facing threats to their survival*

Sun-facing coneflower (*Rudbeckia heliopsidis*)



Sun-facing coneflower / Alan Cressler

Description

The sun-facing coneflower is a perennial herb with hairy, many-branched stems, 2 - 4 feet tall. Leaves are $2\frac{3}{8}$ - 8 inches long and $\frac{3}{4}$ - 2 inches wide, alternate, oval, with rounded bases and pointed tips, smooth to roughly hairy surfaces, and toothed margins. Basal leaves have long leaf stalks and the stem leaves have shorter stalks. Flower heads consist of a raised, rounded, purplish-brown disk, $\frac{3}{8}$ - $\frac{5}{8}$ inch wide; 6 - 12 yellow ray flowers, $\frac{1}{2}$ - $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch long; a whorl of gland-dotted bracts surrounding the base of the head; and thin, very hairy scales (chaff), less than $\frac{1}{16}$ inch long, attached near the base of each disk flower. Fruits are $\frac{1}{8}$ inch long, dry, and seed-like.

Range

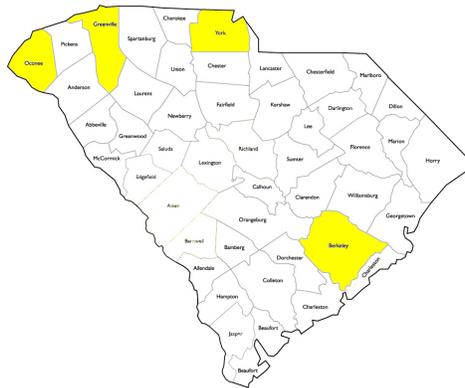
A wide ranging but rare species, the sun-facing coneflower is reported from a variety of physiographic provinces in five southeastern states: Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama. There may be up to 40 occurrences across the range. In South Carolina, it is known from Berkeley, Greenville, Oconee, and York counties.

Habitat

Sun-facing coneflower prefers moist to wet sites such as acidic swales in pine-oak woodlands, peaty seeps in meadows, and sandy alluvium along streams. It occurs in full sun to partial shade. The species can also be found in upland oak-hickory or oak-pine-hickory or open pine-mixed hardwoods. It grows in seeps, bogs, sandy wet clear crop areas or in places with many boulders. The seeps where it is found are acid with grasses, sedges and herbs.

Status

NatureServe's Rounded Global Status is G2 - Imperiled. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was petitioned to list the species in April 2010 and in September 2011 issued a 90-day finding indicating listing may be warranted.



Sun-facing coneflower counties of occurrence

Threats

This species is threatened by management activities that would lead to the destruction of its habitat, namely drainage of swales, but also fire suppression and the succession of woody vegetation. Most sites require manual removal of woody vegetation by mowing, selective cutting, or controlled burns.

Management/Protection Needs

Continue to monitor known populations

for status of threats, site condition, and abundance of plants. Survey potential habitat for new populations. Seek long term protection for exceptional sites. Review most critical threats and consider the feasibility of their removal and how their removal will impact the quality of habitat for the species, as well as other species of interest. Thinning the overstory will benefit this species. Ensure right-of-way management is appropriate for species. It is unknown whether fire benefits this species if done properly.



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References

Georgia Department of Natural Resources - Rare Plant Species Profiles: <http://georgiawildlife.com/speciesinfo/plants>

NatureServe. 2017. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://explorer.natureserve.org>.

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