

IDENTIFICATION: Like all pitcher plants, the green pitcher plant (*Sarracenia oreophila*) is carnivorous, trapping and digesting insects in its tubular leaf. The distinctive hollow, tubular (8 to 30 inches) leaves and hood appear in spring, wither by late summer and are replaced by flattened, pale to reddish leaves that persist until the next growing season. The tubular leaf is green or yellow-green with maroon veins. Yellow flowers drooping from a 2-foot stalk appear in April and bloom into June.



Habitat for green pitcher plant populations in Alabama vary from moist upland sites to boggy areas, streambanks or seeps in a community with grasses, sedges, sphagnum moss and cinnamon fern. Soils of green pitcher plant sites are typically acidic in nature and derived from sandstones or shales. Suitable habitat is typically maintained by a combination of features including acidic, saturated soils and periodic moderate fires which prevent encroachment. Populations in Alabama are primarily limited to areas on Lookout and Sand mountains. At least two populations are known to exist within Desoto State Park.

It was listed as an endangered species on October 21, 1979. It will be considered for delisting when a minimum of 18 viable populations are protected and managed as necessary to ensure their continued existence. Threats to this species include clearing and degradation of its habitat for agricultural, residential, silvicultural, and industrial purposes. As with all carnivorous plants, over-collection by plant enthusiasts and commercial dealers continues to be a problem.

FORESTRY CONSIDERATIONS: Fire is essential to the continued survival and vigor of these plants. Research suggests that a mixture of summer and winter burns is necessary to setback succession, woody encroachment, and provide open space for seed germination. Fireline construction, where necessary, should not alter the drainage pattern of the site or cause a change in the water table. All other forestry activities including harvesting, road construction and site preparation should also avoid those changes.

DISTRIBUTION BY COUNTY: This pitcher plant is known to occur in Cherokee, Dekalb, Etowah, Jackson, and Marshall counties in Alabama. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service believes this species may also occur in Blount, Calhoun, Cleburne and St. Clair counties.

Photo Credit: Brittney Hughes, Alabama State Parks Division, Desoto State Park



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