

IDENTIFICATION: The Alabama leather flower (*Clematis socialis*) is a member of the buttercup family (Ranunculaceae) that was [designated as an endangered species](#) on September 26, 1986. It grows in full sunlight near forest edges and highway rights-of-ways. It prefers wet silty-clay flats near creeks and streams, and is often surrounded by grasses, sedges and herbs. It is an erect herb about 7 - 12 inches tall that often clones itself by sprouting from a rhizome. Sexual reproduction or pollination is inefficient and is typically conducted by two species of bees. Seeds produced are a favorite food source of mice. Lower leaves are opposite and simple while the upper leaves are often composed of multiple leaflets. Blue-violet, dangling, bell-shaped flowers appear in April and May. Its common name is derived from the thick leathery sepals that encase the flower buds prior to opening.



Found only at two sites in Cherokee and St. Clair counties when originally designated as an endangered species in 1986. Since listing, it has also been found in Etowah County, Alabama and Floyd County, Georgia. It is especially vulnerable to heavy vehicular traffic and disturbance from highway maintenance activities such as herbicide application and mowing. A study using small scale mowing and burning at one site showed that this species is not harmed by either management activity. No critical habitat designation occurred as a result of this species being listed as endangered.

FORESTRY CONSIDERATIONS: Activities that dry out sites or disturb soils are harmful to this plant. It is a poor competitor and suffers when the canopy is open too much, but should withstand thinning if not done with heavy equipment. Mechanical site prep would likely destroy it. Prescribed fire could be beneficial to manage woody encroachment. Herbicide application could be harmful, especially if done during the growing season.

DISTRIBUTION BY COUNTY: Found only in Cherokee, Etowah and St. Clair counties in Alabama and Troup county, Georgia.

Photo credit: Dr. Robert Boyd, Auburn University

Text credit: Threatened and Endangered Species of Alabama: A Guide to Assist with Forestry Activities, Second Edition, USFWS and the online [Encyclopedia of Alabama](#).



This information is provided by the Alabama Forestry Commission

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