

IDENTIFICATION: Georgia rockcress, *Arabis georgiana*, is a perennial herb with unbranched stems that grows up to three feet. Basal leaves are lance-shaped but widest above the middle, rounded at the apex, toothed on the margin and two to three inches in length. Alternately arranged stem leaves are also lance-shaped to narrowly elliptical and up to two inches in length. Upper surfaces of the stem leaves have stiff, branched hairs when young and relatively smooth when mature. All leaves tend to be finely hairy. Flowers (March to April) are less than 3/8 inch long and have four white petals in a loosely branched cluster at the top of the stem. The fruit (May-July) is a narrow, straight pod that splits lengthwise exposing brown seeds in single rows on each side of the partition.



Basal leaves of Georgia Rockcress



Flowers of Georgia Rockcress

Georgia rockcress generally occurs on rocky slopes with shallow soils above streams and rivers and underlain or influenced by granite, sandstone, or limestone. Also inhabits loamy sandy soils, particularly in association with large waterways (e.g., Alabama River, Chattahoochee River) in the southern part of its range. Inhabits areas where soils are dry in nature with high or moderately high light intensity. May occasionally be found in adjacent mesic habitats, but it will not persist in heavily shaded conditions.

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service documents state habitat degradation is the most serious threat to the continued existence of Georgia rockcress. Activities such as residential or commercial development, timber harvesting, road building, and grazing have created conditions suitable for invasion by nonnative weeds or other early successional plant species that outcompete Georgia rockcress.

FORESTRY CONSIDERATIONS: Most Georgia rockcress habitat in Alabama is associated with rocky slopes containing shallow soils above streams and rivers. Many of the occupied habitats in Alabama are unsuitable for logging operations due to terrain and proximity to water resources. Following guidelines for establishment of streamside management zones as outlined in Alabama's Best Management Practices for Forestry should protect most Georgia rockcress habitat in Alabama. Although not required by Alabama or federal laws/policies, pre-harvest plans should include a strategy to be as environmentally friendly to sites with Georgia rockcress. Location of skid trails, loading decks, roads and other high use areas should be carefully planned to minimize negative impacts.

DESIGNATION OF CRITICAL HABITAT: When a species is listed as Threatened or Endangered, the US Fish and Wildlife Service must designate critical habitat at the maximum extent prudent and determinable. The designation of critical habitat is based on the best scientific data after taking into consideration economic impact, national security impact, and any other relevant impact of specifying a particular area as critical habitat. Critical habitat is defined as:

- The specific areas within the geographic area occupied by the species, at the time it is listed in accordance with the Endangered Species Act, on which are found those physical or biological features:
 - o Essential to the conservation of the species.
 - o Which may require special management considerations or protection.
 - o Specific areas outside of the geographic range area occupied by the species at the time it is listed, upon a determination that such areas are essential for the conservation of the species.

The designation of critical habitat does not affect land ownership or designate a refuge, wilderness, reserve, preserve, or other conservation area. Such a designation does not allow the government or public to access private lands. Such designation does not require implementation of restoration, recovery, or enhancement measures by non-Federal landowners.

Twelve sites in Alabama and seven in Georgia were designated as [critical habitat on October 14, 2014](#). The twelve sites in Alabama are located in Bibb, Dallas, Elmore, Monroe, Sumter, and Wilcox counties. All sites designated as critical habitat were occupied at the time of the final rule. Two sites in Alabama are under state ownership and the remaining 10 are privately held.

DISTRIBUTION BY COUNTY: Georgia rockcress is known or believed to occur in Autauga, Bibb, Dallas, Elmore, Greene, Henry, Jefferson, Lee, Lowndes, Macon, Monroe, Montgomery, Perry, Russell, Shelby, Sumter, Tallapoosa, and Wilcox counties

For additional information please visit the US Fish and Wildlife Service website:
http://ecos.fws.gov/tess_public/profile/speciesProfile?scode=Q02R

Photo Credit: Jimmy Rickard



This information is provided by the Alabama Forestry Commission
For more information please visit: www.forestry.alabama.gov