

Little Amphianthus

LA09272016

IDENTIFICATION: Little amphianthus (*Gratiola amphiantha*) is a small, aquatic annual plant in the plantain family (Plantaginaceae). Other common names include pool sprite and snorkelwort. This plant only grows in temporary pools on granite outcrops in the Piedmont region of Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina. Two leaf types can be observed for this species: 1) a larger, floating leaf atop a thread-like stem, and 2) a submerged leaf where a small rosette roots the plant in the thin soils of the shallow depressions. White flowers may be borne in the axils of either leaf type. Underwater flowers will not open unless they are exposed to air due to decreasing water levels in the temporary pool. Floating flowers are five-lobed and open in March or April.



This species has a very quick life cycle of three to four weeks due to the temporary availability of its habitat. The temporary pools generally dry out by early to mid-summer. Seeds may lay dormant in dry years.



It was listed as a [threatened species](#) on February 5, 1988. At the time of listing, it was found only in Chambers and Randolph counties. The Natural Heritage Section of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has since documented populations in Tallapoosa County. Critical habitat was not designated because most of the outcrops are easily accessible and increased publicity could quite possibly lead to additional losses. Quarrying continues to pose the biggest risk to the long-term survival of this species. Eutrophication from cattle droppings, litter, trash dumping, fire-building, vandalism, and all-terrain-vehicle traffic continue to negatively impact environmental conditions on the remaining outcrops.

FORESTRY CONSIDERATIONS: Forestry activities in little amphianthus habitat would probably be very limited due to the sparsely vegetated nature of most granite outcrops. Care should be taken not to disturb or alter the outcrop microhabitat while conducting forestry activities directly adjacent to and especially upslope of the temporary pools. Read and follow label directions when using any type of herbicide to ensure it does not impact this species or its habitat.

DISTRIBUTION BY COUNTY: Distribution occurs in Chambers, Randolph and Tallapoosa counties in Alabama.

Photo Credits: Dr. T. Wayne Barger, Natural Heritage Section, Alabama State Lands Division



This information is provided by the Alabama Forestry Commission

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