

IDENTIFICATION: Morefield's Leather Flower (*Clematis morefieldii*) is a perennial, climbing vine in the buttercup family (Ranunculaceae) that grows to about 16 feet in length. It has dense white hairs on the shoot and velvety lower leaf surfaces. The compound leaves may be up to 8 inches in length with 9 to 11 leaflets. Pinkish, urn shaped flowers, up to 1 inch in length, bloom from late May to early July.



It is often found near seeps under mixed hardwoods on rocky south and southwest facing mountain slopes with limestone substrates. Trees found near it often include smoketree and chinquapin oak.

This species was discovered and first described by James Morefield, a botany student, in 1982. At the [time of listing](#) in 1992, this species was known to occur at only five sites in Madison County, Alabama. Recent surveys have documented 22 known populations in Alabama (Madison and Jackson counties) and Tennessee (Grundy and Franklin counties). U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service documents indicate reclassification of this species will be considered when at least 10 viable populations are protected to the degree that they are secure from present and foreseeable threats. Seven populations are on protected lands but all are not vigorous. Habitat destruction or modification due to urban development, timber management, roadside maintenance or other activities have caused the loss or decline of populations and these threats continue to pose concern to the remaining populations.

FORESTRY CONSIDERATIONS: Use of fire is unlikely on occupied sites. Mechanical site prep and clearcutting would damage this species. Light thinnings might be tolerated if it didn't lead to increased competition. Take care during thinning operations to avoid direct impacts to the plant. Herbicide use should follow label directions and applied so as not to impact this species.

DISTRIBUTION BY COUNTY: This plant is found only in Madison and Jackson counties. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service believes it may also occur in Blount, Cherokee, Cullman, Dekalb, Etowah, Lawrence, Madison and Morgan counties.

Photo Credit: Alan Cressler



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