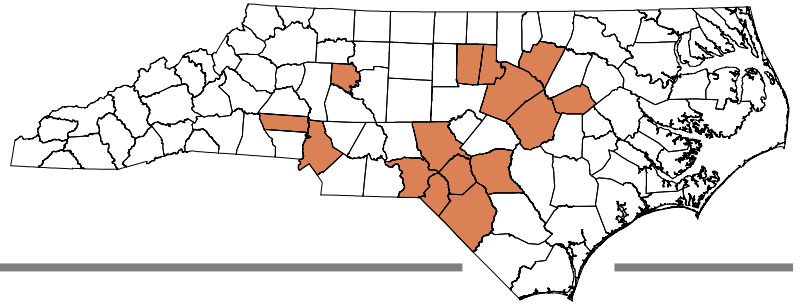


Michaux's sumac

Rhus michauxii

(False poison sumac, dwarf sumac)

Endangered (September 28, 1989)



Description: Michaux's sumac is a non-poisonous, low-growing, deciduous, densely hairy shrub. The erect stems grow from an underground rhizome to a height of 1-3 ft (30-91 cm). The compound leaves are alternate and divided into long rows of 9-13 stalkless leaflets. The leaflets are 1.6-3.5 inches (4-9 cm) long, oblong, winged at the base, dull on the top, hairy on the bottoms, with toothed edges. The terminal leaflet has a 2 inch (5 cm) long winged petiole. Flowers grow at the top of the plant in a dense, erect cluster, colored greenish-yellow to white, and are 4-5 parted. Fruit are hairy reddish drupes, each containing one seed.

Life History: Leaves emerge in April to May, flowering occurs April to June, and fruiting occurs August to October with fruits persisting for several months. Plants are generally dioecious. Plants have been known to produce male flowers one year and female flowers the next. Other plants are monoecious with both male and female flowers at one time. Usually less than half of the stems in a subpopulation do not flower in a given season. Even though fruit may be plentiful, seed viability is low. This may be a result of self-incompatibility or hybridization with other *Rhus*. Species usually produces asexually from thick, shallow horizontal rhizomes. The low reproductive capacity is probably the most crucial factor endangering this species.

Habitat: Sandy, loamy swales and depressions, acidic and circumneutral uplands, and rocky open woods. Grows best where disturbance has maintained an open area. Has been found along roadsides, in powerline clearings, and areas where forest canopies have been opened up by blowdowns and/or hurricane damage. Episodic fires accentuate habitat and reduce hardwood encroachment, recycle

nutrients, and aid regeneration of longleaf pine/wiregrass communities.

Distribution: Endemic to the inner coastal plain and lower piedmont of North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and Georgia. In North Carolina, it is found in Cumberland, Davie, Durham*, Franklin, Hoke, Johnston*, Lincoln*, Mecklenburg*, Moore, Orange*, Richmond, Robeson, Scotland, Wake, and Wilson* counties.

Threats: Decline in longleaf pine/wiregrass/*Rhus michauxii* habitat because of suppression of natural, periodic fire regime, allowing succession to proceed which results in crowding and shading out of *Rhus* by other competitive plants. Habitat is lost to agriculture, silviculture, commercial and residential development, road construction and improvement. Other threats to the small, geographically isolated, unisex populations are hybridization with other *Rhus* species, fungal disease, and stem borers.

Management Recommendations:

Protection of habitat and present populations by keeping areas open with prescribed fire regime, timber harvesting, and appropriate right-of-way maintenance. Research into genetic reasons for low sexual reproduction and hybridization implications.

* No record has been reported in this county in the past 20 years.

Sources: Jackson et al. 1992, Radford et al. 1964, USFWS 1992a.

