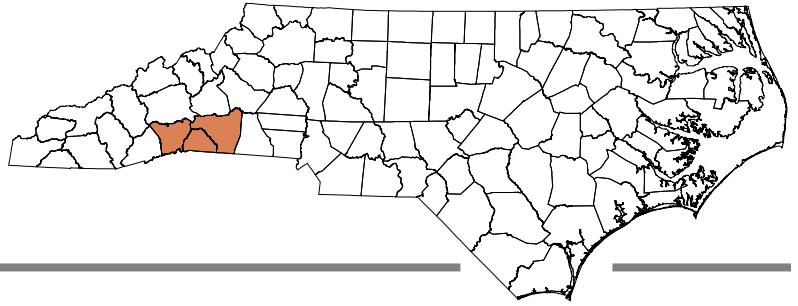


# White irisette

*Sisyrinchium dichotomum*

Endangered (September 26, 1991)



**Description:** White irisette is a perennial herb with dichotomously branching stems, 4-8 inches (11-20 cm) tall. Leaves at the base of the plant are pale to bluish green and grow to one-third to one-half the height of the plant. The flowers are tiny, 0.3 inch (7.5 mm) long, occurring in clusters of 4 to 6 at the tops of winged stems. The fruit is a pale to medium brown capsule containing 3 to 6 rounded black seeds.

**Life History:** Flowering occurs late May-July. Little is known of the autecology of this species. An individual plant is a cluster of stems rising from fibrous roots. There is no data on pollinators or seed vectors. Pollen has 63% fertility and seed production is low.

**Habitat:** Clearings and edges of upland woods with a thin canopy. Also found in road/powerline rights-of-way. Prefers partial shade to direct sun and rich, basic soils, probably weathered from amphibolite. May grow on sites where run-off has removed the usual deep layer of leaf litter. Soils are intermittently saturated with rain but well drained. Plants are prone to desiccation because of aspect and steepness of slopes and shallowness of soil. Disturbance is necessary to maintain a relatively open habitat.

**Distribution:** Endemic to the upper piedmont of North Carolina and South Carolina, range is bounded by White Oak Mountain, Sugarloaf Mountain, Chimney Rock, and Melrose Mountain. Reported in North Carolina in Henderson, Polk, and Rutherford counties.

**Threats:** Endangered primarily by suppression of natural disturbance, alteration of habitat for industrial and residential development, encroachment by exotic species, trampling, and highway construction and improvements.

**Management Recommendations:** Two of the remaining eight populations in North Carolina are within highway rights-of-way (one maintained by NC DOT and one privately maintained in a community recreational area); one population is along a private road right-of-way and underneath a powerline; and a fourth population is adjacent to a secondary road. Populations of *Sisyrinchium dichotomum* that occur in right-of-ways need control of invasive exotic plants. Any maintenance of the row should be done during the dormant season, generally from 31 October to 31 March. Research is ongoing to determine best management practices, including the effects of prescribed fire.

Sources: Murdock 1991; Murdock pers. com.; USFWS 1991c, 1992a, 1995f.

