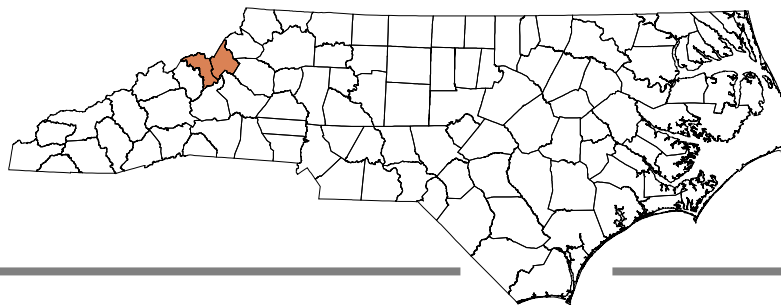


# Blue Ridge goldenrod

*Solidago spithamaea*

Threatened, (March 28, 1985)



**Description:** The Blue Ridge goldenrod is a hairy perennial with stems erect and angled, 4-16 inches (10-41 cm) tall, and strongly ribbed at the base. The deep yellow-green leaves are distributed alternately along the stem. They are elliptically shaped, smooth-surfaced with toothed edges, 1.2-2.4 inches (3-6 cm) long and 0.3-0.8 inch (0.8-2 cm) wide, with pointed tips. The flower head forms a compact, flat-topped cluster of 20-30 yellow flowers. Petals on the outer (ray) flowers are 0.8-1.6 inches (2-4 cm) long.

**Life History:** Blue Ridge goldenrod is an early pioneer species. Plants spread vegetatively from short, stout rhizomes and occasionally reproduce by seed. Flowering occurs July-September. Fruit are small nutlets, 0.11-0.16 inch (2.8-4 mm) long, with hairs above the middle of the nutlet only and are present from July to October.

**Habitat:** Cliffs, ledges, balds, and rock outcrops of higher mountain peaks, above 4600 ft (1400 m) elevation that are exposed to full sun. Soils are generally acidic and shallow humus or clay loams, intermittently saturated.

**Distribution:** Endemic to mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee. Found in Avery and Mitchell counties.

**Threats:** Rarity of populations, small numbers, and being confined to isolated areas on a few rocky summits makes this species extremely vulnerable to trampling by hikers, climbers, and sightseers. Weather-related hazards include climatic extremes such as severe drought, ice and wind damage, and erosion of the steep habitat, which could decrease available suitable habitat adjacent to sources of seed and rhizomes. Erosion is often exacerbated by recreational over-use.

**Management Recommendations:** Preservation of existing plants and essential habitat. Search for additional populations. Enforce laws protecting the species and its habitat. Route hikers and other visitors away from sites.

*Note: Several other endangered plant species are ecological associates of the Blue Ridge goldenrod, including Heller's blazing star, Roan Mountain bluet, and spreading avens.*

*Sources: Hardin 1977; Lowe et al. 1990; Radford et al. 1964; USFWS 1987, 1992a.*

