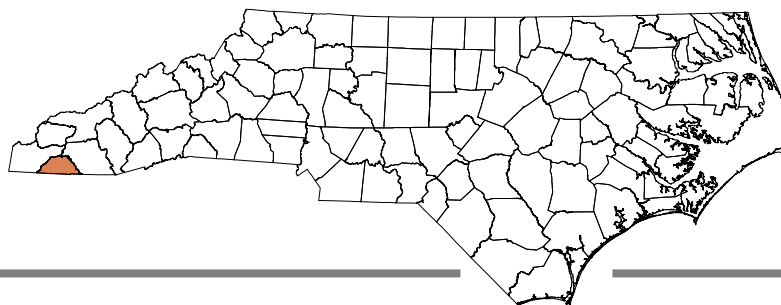


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# Green pitcher plant

*Sarracenia oreophila*

Endangered (September 21, 1979)



**Description:** The green pitcher plant is an insectivorous, rhizomatous perennial, 8-30 inches (20-75 cm) tall, with green to yellow-green tubular, pitcher-like leaves. Leaves widen near the top, with a flaring mouth, and are topped with a hood. The hood is large, tilts upward slightly, and has a keel, or ridge, down the back. When the leaves are exposed to sunlight, they may develop reddish veins and a purple blotch at the mouth of the pitcher. A solitary, nodding, yellow flower blooms at the top of a 18-28 inches (45-70 cm) long stem. The pitchers contain liquid and enzymes. Insects that fall into the pitchers are digested and nutrients from their bodies are absorbed into the plant's tissue.

**Life History:** Pitchers and flower buds appear in early April. Flowering occurs mid-April to early June. Pitchers die off around mid-summer, and are replaced by small, flat, sharply curved leaves (phyllodia), which persist until the following spring. The numerous phyllodia are an important feature in distinguishing this species from other pitcher plants. There is considerable interaction with insects that function as pollinators (queen bumblebees) and feed on particulate matter in the pitcher fluid as well as plant tissue, and serve as prey providing a mineral supplement for the plant in the nutrient poor habitats. Reproduces both sexually (by seed) and asexually (by rhizomes) but the latter appears to be dominant.

**Habitat:** Favors highly acidic soils that are wet at least part of the growing season. Habitat varies, ranging from seepage bogs to streambanks in North Carolina and Alabama. Occurs in poorly drained oak and oak-pine flatwoods in Georgia. May require periodic fire to impede the growth of competing woody plants. Thrives on nutrient-poor soils.

**Distribution:** Restricted to areas of the Cumberland Plateau, the Ridge and Valley province in northeast Alabama, and the Blue Ridge of Georgia and North Carolina. It previously occurred in the coastal plain and piedmont of Alabama and Georgia and the Cumberland Plateau of east Tennessee.

**Threats:** Shrub and tree encroachment due to fire suppression, degradation of habitat by residential and road construction, drainage from agricultural and silviculture practices, commercial/amateur collection of live plants. Flooding and streambank changes due to human disturbance have also caused plant loss.

**Management Recommendations:** Restore natural hydrology to degraded habitat. Provide protection to existing populations and habitat. Burn where necessary.

*Sources: Lowe et al. 1990, Radford et al. 1964, Schnell 1976, USFWS 1992a.*

