



Rare Plants of Louisiana

Ruellia noctiflora – night-flowering wild-petunia Acanthus family (Acanthaceae)

Rarity Ranks: S1/G2

Range: AL, FL, GA, LA, MS

Recognition:

- 1) Perennial herb to 16” tall, stems purplish with short hairs
- 2) Leaves opposite, to 2.8” long
- 3) Flowers opening at night and falling by mid-morning; flowers reportedly may open during the day stimulated by dark skies of a thunderstorm

Flowering Time: May-August

Light Requirement: Full sun to part shade

Wetland Status: FACW - usually occurs in wetlands

Habitats: Longleaf pine flatwoods savannah.

Threats:

- 1) Conversion of habitat to intensively-managed pine plantations – chemical and mechanical site prep and dense tree spacing
- 2) Fire exclusion
- 3) Residential and commercial development
- 4) Exotic species such as cogon grass (*Imperata cylindrica*) may take advantage of soil disturbances to gain a foothold in night-flowering wild-petunia habitat

Beneficial management practices:

- 1) Thinning, targeting for removal off-site species such as slash and loblolly pines
- 2) Prescribed burning, including growing season (April-June) fires to achieve maximum woody plant control
- 3) Minimize soil disturbance (do not establish food plots, additional roads, etc.) in pine savannah habitat; clean logging equipment to prior to entering site to avoid introducing exotics
- 4) Monitor for and treat cogon grass and other exotic plant infestations





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Immature fruit of night-flowering wild-petunia.



A single node showing opposite leaves and leaf shape.

Herbarium specimen of night-flowering wild-petunia showing growth habit. Ruler on sheet is 2". Specimen images provided by LSU Herbarium.

References:

Chafin, L.G. 2000. Field guide to the rare plants of Florida. Florida Natural Areas Inventory, Tallahassee, Florida.

Godfrey, R. K. and J. W. Wooten. 1981. *Aquatic and Wetland Plants of Southeastern United States: Dicotyledons*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

NatureServe. 2006. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 6.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. (Accessed: February 5, 2007).

Smith, L.M. 2007. Personal communication regarding observation of *Ruellia noctiflora* flowering after thunderstorms.