

Rare Plants of Louisiana



Croomia pauciflora - croomia Stemona Family (Stemonaceae)

Rarity Rank: SH/G3 (Historical in Louisiana)

	1	2	3	4	5
State					
Global					
	imperiled		rare		secure

Range: AL, FL, GA, LA

Recognition:

- Perennial herb with 4 to 6 leaves clustered at the top of an unbranched stem; stem 10 to 40 cm tall
- Leaf blades elliptic-ovate, 5 to 15 cm long, with heart-shaped (= cordate bases)
- Flowers greenish and sometimes purple tinged, 3 to 5 mm long, on slender, drooping stalks
- Flowers are often hidden by the umbrella-like arrangements of the stem leaves
- Fruit an ovoid capsule 3 to 6 mm
- At first glance *Croomia* may resemble a wild yam (*Dioscorea* spp.), which is a herbaceous vine; *Croomia* may also superficially resemble a herbaceous greenbrier (*Smilax* spp.), also a vine but young plants may not yet have the habit of a vine



Photo by Caroline Dean

Flowering Time: March to April

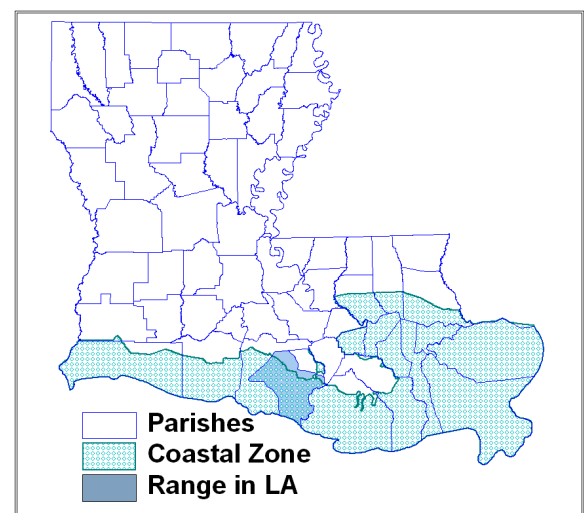
Light Requirement: Shade

Wetland Indicator Status:

Does not occur in wetlands anywhere in range

Habitat:

In Louisiana we have one historical record based on a specimen collected in April of 1870 with the locality “Brasher City,” which is now Morgan City. Whether the locality is correct or erroneous we do not know. Elsewhere in its range, *Croomia pauciflora* often grows in calcareous soils. Loess-derived soils can be somewhat calcareous, and if the area where Morgan City now sits was at one time an upland forest on high ground, and the soils loess-derived and rich, then the historical record is plausible. Current searches for this species should be carried out in ravines on Weeks and Cote Blanche Islands, which support the least disturbed salt dome hardwood forest habitat, and have rich loess soils.



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Threats:

- Historical and ongoing loss of rich, mesic upland hardwood forests in the coastal zone
- Unnatural rates of erosion
- Exotic species

Beneficial Management Practices:

- Search for this species at Weeks and Cote Blanche Islands!
- Protect remaining salt dome hardwood forest habitat
- Identify and protect “high-sites” in bottomland forests, sites that have the potential to support plants of drier site affinity

LA River Basins: Terrebonne, Atchafalaya, Vermilion-Teche



Photo by C. Johnson, courtesy of Smithsonian Institution

References:

Nelson, G. 2005. East Gulf Coastal Plain wildflowers. The Globe Pequot Press. Guilford, CT. 263 pp.

Small, J. K. 1933. Manual of the southeastern flora. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill. 1554 pp.

USDA, NRCS. 2008. The PLANTS Database (<http://plants.usda.gov>). National Plant Data Center, Baton Rouge, LA 70874-4490 USA.

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For more information, please visit our Web pages at

www.wlf.la.gov/wildlife/louisiana-natural-heritage-program or 225-765-2811

www.BTNEP.org or 1-800-259-0869