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# Conserving South Carolina's At-Risk Species:

## *Species facing threats to their survival*

### Purple-disk honeycomb-head (*Balduina atropurpurea*)



*Purple-disk honeycomb-head* / Alan Cressler

#### Description

Purple-disk honeycomb-head is a perennial herb 1 - 3¼ feet tall. Stems are erect, angled, and purplish at the base. It has basal leaves up to 5 inches long and ½ inch wide, with dark red leaf stalks. Stem leaves are smaller, widely spaced, alternate, slightly fleshy, spoon-shaped, and dotted with tiny translucent glands. Flower heads have many dark, reddish-purple disk flowers in the center, and 10 - 20 yellow ray flowers, each ray with 3 - 5 teeth at the tip. Fruits are small, dry, and seed-like, held in an elevated “honeycombed” receptacle at the center of the head. The “honeycomb” may be seen by removing the disk flowers or the fruits. Yellow honeycomb-head (*Balduina uniflora*) often grows with purple honeycomb-head; it has yellow disk flowers. Southeastern tickseed (*Coreopsis gladiata*) has dark red disk flowers, but only 5 - 8 ray flowers and no “honeycomb.” Sneezeweeds (*Helenium spp.*) often have purple disk flowers but they bloom in the spring and early summer, and lack the gland-dotted leaves and honeycombed receptacle. Blanket flower (*Gaillardia spp.*) has yellow rays and dark disk flowers, but occurs only in dry, sandy uplands.

#### Range

Purple-disk honeycomb-head is known from the Coastal Plain of Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, and, possibly, Alabama and North Carolina. In South Carolina, the species is known from Darlington and Richland counties.



*Purple-disk honeycomb-head* - Counties of Occurrence

#### Habitat

The plant can be found in wet pine flatwoods, savannahs, peaty hillside seepage bogs, and pitcherplant bogs. It is usually associated with longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) or slash pine (*P. elliottii*).

#### Status

NatureServe gives Purple-disk honeycomb-head a Rounded Global Status of G2 - Imperiled. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was petitioned to list the species in April 2010 and in September 2011, issued a 90-day finding that the petition presented substantial scientific or commercial information indicating that listing may be warranted. The species is being reviewed for possible listing under the Endangered Species Act.

#### Threats

A southeastern Coastal Plain endemic with widely separated occurrences, much

of its naturally rare wet savannah and bog habitat has been altered or destroyed by fire suppression and by drainage and conversion to agriculture and pine plantations. Conversion of habitat for development is also a threat.

#### Management/Protection Needs

Burning every 2 to 3 years during the growing season to control woody vegetation is recommended. Prevent alterations to wetland hydrology by avoiding draining, ditching, firebreak construction, clearing, bedding, and soil disturbance. Hand thinning of shading trees may be beneficial. Burn every 2 - 3 years during the growing season.



*Purple-disk honeycomb-head habitat* / Pete Patavina

#### References

Georgia Department of Natural Resources - Rare Plant Species Profiles: <http://georgiawildlife.com/sites/default/files/uploads/wildlife/nongame/pdf/accounts/plants>  
NatureServe. 2017. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://explorer.natureserve.org>.

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