

PHACELIA RANUNCULACEA (Nutt.) Constance
Blue Scorpion-weed

FAMILY: Hydrophyllaceae

HABIT: Herbaceous winter-annual, 0.5-2.5 dm.; flowering April, May; fruiting May, June.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Extremely similar to *Ellisia nyctelea*. Collections of both of these plants should always be carefully checked, as their similarity has led to many misidentifications. The flowers are solitary in *Ellisia* and cymose in *Phacelia*.

TOTAL RANGE: NE. VA and adj. MD; c. NC; s. IN and s. IL, to w. TN, se. MO, and n. AR.

STATE RANGE (as of 2008): Post-1980 records are from Lawrence County.

HABITAT: In sun or semi-shade in a variety of moist or well-drained woods and thickets.

HAZARDS: Unknown, perhaps exposure to direct sunlight after logging.

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: This plant depends on seeds for yearly production. If a widely disjunct population were eliminated, it would remain extirpated unless seeds became available from a new source.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: Mature flowering material needed for identification.

COMMENTS: Although this species may have been destroyed at its former location, it is still possible that other populations will be located. The plant is obvious only for a relatively brief period when in flower.

This plant has two disjunct chromosomal races. These cytotypes cannot be correlated with distinct morphological types, and they may occur relatively near each other.

In a study of one of the Potomac River populations (Allard, 1940), it was discovered that the seeds germinated in the fall and produced a vegetative overwintering plant that was extremely hardy to extreme winter cold, even though it appeared very delicate. Initiation of flowering was apparently determined by both photoperiod and springtime temperatures. After flowering, the plants disappeared and left no above ground trace during the summer.

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