

CROOMIA

Croomia pauciflora (Nutt.) Torr.

Synonyms: none

Family: Stemonaceae (stemona)

FNAI Ranks: G3/S2

Legal Status: US-none; FL-Endangered



Gil Nelson

Field Description: Perennial **herb** with an erect, somewhat fleshy **stem** to 30 cm tall, occurring in patches of several plants. **Leaves** heart-shaped, 4 - 6 clustered at the top of the stem, alternate but appearing whorled or spiraled when viewed from above; with conspicuous, parallel veins strongly curving from the leaf base to the leaf tip. **Flowers** tiny with 4 green, spreading petals and 4 stout, maroon stamens with orange tips; nodding below the leaves on 2.5 cm stalks. **Fruit** a small, fleshy, green capsule.

Similar Species: Upright carrion-flower (*Smilax ecirrhata*) has wirier stems, 0.3 - 0.6 m tall, and leaves with short-pointed tips and cross-veins between the main, parallel veins. Climbing carrion-flower (*Smilax lasioneuron*) has tendrils and leaves with cross-veins. Sarsaparilla-vine (*Smilax pumila*), a ground-hugging vine, has hairy leaves. Wild yams (*Dioscorea* spp.) are climbing vines with leaves similar to croomia's but that are alternate or whorled and do not appear spiraled.

Related Rare Species: Croomia is the only member of this family in North America.

Habitat: Rich, moist, deciduous slope and ravine forests.

Best Survey Season: Spring; April - May, but may be identified from leaves until mid-summer.

Range-wide Distribution: FL Panhandle, SE AL, SW GA.

Conservation Status: 14 populations are known in FL, half of which are on conservation lands.

Protection and Management: Avoid clearcutting slopes and ravines; prevent grazing and cattle trampling in hardwood forests; control exotic pest plant species, especially Japanese honeysuckle.

References: Coile 2000, Harper 1942, Kral 1983, Rogers 1982, Ward 1979, Whetstone 1984, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.

