

WHITE-TOP PITCHERPLANT

Sarracenia leucophylla Raf.

Synonyms: none

Family: Sarraceniaceae (pitcherplant)

FNAI Ranks: G3/S3

Legal Status: US-none FL-Endangered

Wetland Status: US-OBL+ FL-OBL



Field Description: Carnivorous plant with narrow pitchers topped with white hoods that are conspicuously red or purple-veined. Flowers are maroon with large petals and a distinctive umbrella-shaped style. Although the Florida Panhandle has several native pitcherplants, *Sarracenia leucophylla* is the only species whose pitchers have white tops.

Similar Species: White-topped pitcherplant is similar to parrot pitcherplant (*Sarracenia psittacina*) and hooded pitcherplant (*Sarracenia minor*) in having white patches and windows on the upper portions of leaves and hoods; the other three pitcher plant species lack this character. Differences between parrot and white-topped pitcherplant are position of the pitcher aperture and habit. Parrot pitcherplant has the pitcher opening directly under the hood and has decumbent pitchers while white-topped pitcherplant has a terminal opening on one side of an erect pitcher. While hooded pitcher plant and white-topped pitcherplant both have

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erect pitchers with terminal openings and white windows/patches on the hoods, they differ in several ways. White-topped pitcherplant has distinctive white patches with a network of red veins throughout the pitchers and hoods, the terminal opening of the pitcher has an erect hood over it but leaving the opening un-covered, and petals are red-maroon. Hooded pitcherplant has white patches that are more restricted in coverage occurring below the opening of the pitcher and the hood is bent over the opening reducing access to the aperture, petals are yellow. Currently the distribution range of both species does not overlap with white-topped pitcherplant restricted to northwest FL and hooded pitcherplant occupying the peninsula of Florida.

Related Rare Species: Six of the seven pitcher plant non-hybrid species that are known to occur in Florida, are designated as rare species: Gulf coast redflower pitcherplant (*Sarracenia rubra* ssp. *gulfensis*), Wherry's redflower pitcherplant (*Sarracenia rubra* ssp. *wherryi*), parrot pitcherplant (*Sarracenia psittacina*), Gulf purple pitcherplant (*Sarracenia rosea*), and hooded pitcherplant (*Sarracenia minor*) and white-top pitcherplant (*Sarracenia leucophylla*). Parrot, hooded and white-topped pitcherplants have white patches or windows on upper portions of leaves and/or hoods and the former has sprawling pitchers and the latter two have erect. Yellow pitcherplant (*Sarracenia flava*), Gulf purple pitcherplant (*Sarracenia rosea*), Gulf coast redflower pitcherplant and Wherry's redflower pitcherplant lack the white patches and windows. The yellow pitcherplant (*Sarracenia flava*) is not listed as rare, and is distinguished by its tall, tubular, yellow-parrot green pitchers and bright yellow petals. Gulf purple pitcherplant has urn-shaped decumbent pitchers with hoods that are erect and wide open pitcher apertures that are lined with a thick rim and have pink petals. Both Gulf coast redflower pitcherplant and Wherry's redflower pitcherplant have erect, thin tubular pitchers with recurved hoods that cover the pitcher aperture and have red petals. Six of the seven pitcher plant species and nine recognized hybrids occur in northwest Florida. The hooded pitcherplant occurs throughout Florida, but has only been found as far west as Gulf, Liberty, and Gadsden Counties and as far south as Highlands County.

Habitat: Found in ditches, bogs and at edges of baygalls in sunny, low, wet areas with wiregrass.

Best Survey Season: Spring; April-May

Range-wide Distribution: Native to the panhandle of Florida as well as Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi, and is considered vulnerable or imperiled in all four states.

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Conservation Status: White-top pitcherplant has been vouchered in 11 northwest Florida counties. Twenty-three managed areas are known to have populations of white-top pitcher plants. Threats to this species include disturbances caused by wild hog digging, woody encroachment from fire exclusion, and land clearing.

Protection and Management: Benefits from more frequent fires that are allowed to burn into tree edges and open up the habitat.

References: Wunderlin and Hansen 2011, Coile 2000, Wunderlin, et al. 2020, FNA 2009, Chafin 2000, Godfrey and Wooten 1981