



TREES AND PLANTS

VIRGINIA SNEEZEWOOD

ABOUT

The Virginia Sneezewood (*Helenium virginicum*) is a wetland plant from the Sunflower family, found on the shores of naturally occurring, shallow, and seasonally flooded limestone ponds. It is a rare perennial wildflower. This herbaceous plant likes poorly drained, acidic, silty loam soils that are usually flooded between January and July. Once the plant is a year old it produces yellow flowers in July, blooms until October/November, and can reach a height of 3.5 feet. The Virginia Sneezewood primarily relies on bees, wasps, butterflies, and hoverflies for pollination. Seeds are dispersed in late fall and winter and germinate the following year in late summer or early fall if the conditions are right.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Virginia Sneezewood was first discovered in 1936 and listed as threatened in 1998. This plant got its name from early settlers who dried the yellow flowers to grind into powder for snuff. They sniffed the snuff to make them sneeze, thus clearing their noses. In 1998 the plant was thought to be restricted to around 25 seasonally flooded sinkhole ponds and meadows in two counties in northwest Virginia, however, more than 25 populations in Missouri have been found since. This species is threatened by residential development, off-road vehicle use, incompatible agricultural activity, logging, and other disruptions of its habitat like the filling and ditching of wetlands. It can cope with disturbances such as mowing and grazing, however, it cannot tolerate shade or overlong periods of flooding. The populations of this plant vary greatly depending on water level changes, and currently they are found in 25 to 30 sites in Virginia and at least the same in Missouri. The number of plants varies from year to year depending on conditions.

For more detailed information visit: www.centerforplantconservation.org or www.fws.gov.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

What did early settlers use Virginia Sneezewood for?

- a) Flavoring for food
- b) Snuff
- c) Dying cloth
- d) Cold medicine

Answer is B.

