

Technical Report

Wetland Flora



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Gene Silberhorn

Monkey-flower

Mimulus alatus Ait.

Growth Habit and Diagnostic Characteristics

The main feature of this perennial herb (1 to 3 feet tall) is its lavender flowers whose shape resembles domestic snapdragons (*Antirrhinum*). Both genera belong to the Scrophulariaceae, the figwort or snapdragon family. The flowers are solitary on short stalks in the axils of the leaves. A close look will reveal that the center or throat of the flower has yellow-reddish spots. Flower color (ranging from pale lavender to violet) and associated "spots" (yellow to red) are quite variable from one location to another and with the age of the flower. Simple leaves (2 to 4 inches long) with distinct petioles and coarsely serrated margins are oppositely arranged on winged or angled stems. This plant often produces clones from underground rhizomes. A closely related species, *Mimulus ringens*, also grows in wetlands and is similar with lavender flowers, but the leaf blades narrow and connect with the stem so there is no apparent petiole. The flowers extend from long, narrow stalks. These two species often hybridize.

Distribution

Mimulus alatus ranges throughout much of eastern United States.

Habitat

Monkey-flower is seldom a common plant in flood plain forests, swamp margins, pond shores, stream banks and ditches, but when it is encountered, it is almost always in wet conditions. It often occurs in small colonies because it reproduces vegetatively via rhizomes.

Ecological Values/Benefits

Valued for its esthetic qualities. The tiny seeds have little wildlife food value.

Wetland Indicator Status

According to the *Draft Revision of the National List of Plant Species that Occur in Wetlands, 1997*, *Mimulus alatus* is classified as an **obligate wetland plant (OBL)**. OBLs are plants that almost always occur in wetlands (>99% probability).

Mimulus alatus Ait.



Wetlands Program
School of Marine Science
Virginia Institute of Marine Science
College of William and Mary
Gloucester Point, Virginia 23062
Dr. Carl Hershner, Program Director

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