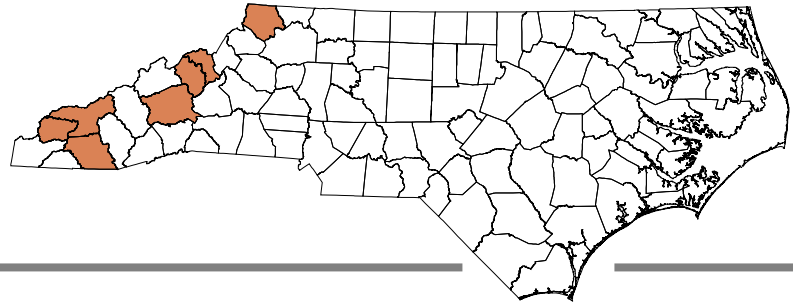


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# Virginia spiraea

*Spiraea virginiana*

Threatened (July 16, 1990)

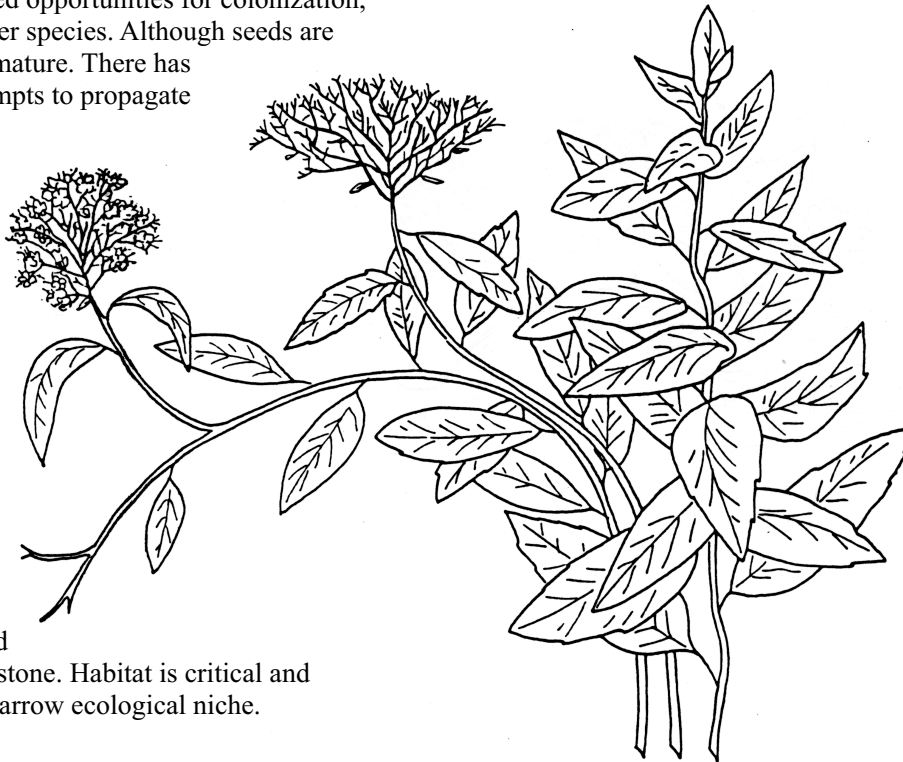


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**Description:** Virginia spiraea is a perennial shrub of the rose family that grows 2-10 ft (0.6-3 m) tall, with arching, upright stems. Leaves may be shaped in a narrow ellipse, with a tapered base and a short burr at the end of the tip; leaf shape can be variable, however. Edges may be toothed. There is a whitish bloom (powdery layer) on the leaf undersurface. The flowers grow in flat-topped clusters at the ends of a branching stalk. There are 5 petals and sepals. Petals are white, occasionally pink, 0.04-0.12 inch (1-3 mm) long. Plants may grow in dense clumps.

**Life History:** Flowering occurs late May-July. The fruit is dry, smooth and glossy, 0.1-0.12 inch (2.5-3 mm) long. The seeds are long and narrow, 0.07-0.08 inch (1.8-2 mm) long, with a dull pebbled surface and a slender tail. Fruiting occurs August-September. Species is rare because it reproduces asexually, has a narrowly defined habitat niche subject to natural disturbance, limited opportunities for colonization, and competition from other species. Although seeds are plentiful in number, few mature. There has been little success in attempts to propagate seeds.

**Habitat:** Flood-scoured, high-gradient rocky riverbanks; braided areas of lower stream reaches, gorges, and canyons; as well as disturbed rights-of-way. Grows in thickets, in association with a variety of grape species (*Vitis* spp.) and royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*), among other plant associations. Occurs in sunny areas on moist, acid soils, primarily over sandstone. Habitat is critical and restricts the species to a narrow ecological niche.



**Distribution:** Mountains in Ashe, Buncombe\*, Graham, Macon, Mitchell, Swain, and Yancey counties.

**Threats:** Human disturbance to critical habitat and small populations by reservoir, highway, and railroad maintenance and construction resulting in erosion, severe flooding or inundation; dumping; and clearing of pathways to rivers and streams by hikers and rafters.

**Management Recommendations:** Protection of populations and habitat on federal and state lands; education of private landowners; and secured voluntary protection by easements and registration.

\* No record has been reported in this county in the past 20 years.

Sources: Radford et al. 1964, USFWS 1992a.