
Wildflower Spot – June 2011
John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

TALL SKULLCAP

Scutellaria integrifolia

By Helen Hamilton, *President of the John Clayton Chapter, VNPS*

The soft blue flowers of this species of skullcap are about one inch long, with arched upper lip and flaring lower lip. Tall or hyssop skullcap can be distinguished from other skullcaps by the combination of untoothed leaves and showy flowers clustered in a terminal raceme. Stems are square, and finely hairy, 1-2 feet tall, somewhat sprawling. This perennial plant begins in the spring as a basal rosette of arrow-shaped leaves, but soon produces its upright stalk with opposite, elliptical leaves.

Once flowering is complete, wafer-like seed capsules ripen along the stems. Like many members of the mint family, skullcap produces large numbers of seed, resulting in large numbers of seedlings. Where unwanted, they are easy to remove. Deadheading the flowers just after blooming will limit the number of seeds produced. This plant mixes well with black-eyed susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) and beardtongue (*Penstemon digitalis*). Once established, the plant thrives and spreads without much additional care.

Skullcap grows best in full sun and wet soil in fields and borders of woods and clearings.



Found in nearly every county in Virginia, especially in the coastal plain, the range extends from eastern Massachusetts to Florida and Texas, and inland to southern Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee.

The many different species of skullcaps are recognized by the tiny projection, or hump, on the top of the calyx surrounding the base of the flower. ❖

Photo: Tall Skullcap (*Scutellaria integrifolia*) taken by Phillip Merritt
For more information about native plants visit www.vnps.org.