

July 2021 Plant of the Month



Lysimachia terrestris (L.) Britt., Swamp candles

The July *Plant of the Month* is swamp candles, a bright yellow perennial in the genus *Lysimachia*. Modern nomenclatural experts classify the genus within the Primrose family Primulaceae, or in a sub tropical family Myrsinaceae. The species is widely distributed the east and central United States. It is found through the Mid-Atlantic and Southern Coastal Plain. Mary Hough (1983) documented the species throughout New Jersey. Her work found it most prominent within the Pinelands. This is an obligate wetland plant commonly seen along stream banks, cranberry bogs, and lakeshores.

Swamp candles is an upright perennial with narrow opposite leaves. When in flower it forms a striking raceme of five petal flowers, each with a red center. This flower coloration is characteristic of New Jersey's *Lysimachia* species. New Jersey supports numerous addition species. Our flora includes the following yellow loosestrifes: *Lysimachia ciliata*, *hybrida*, *nummularia*, *punctata*, *quadrifolia*, *terrestris*, *thyrsiflora*, and *vulgaris*.

The genus *Lysimachia* had Native American uses for medicine, primarily as decoctions for gastrointestinal aid and kidney problems (Moerman, 1998). Swamp candles flower from late June until September. The plant is in full flower here in Gloucester County, and it is the same no doubt throughout our Coastal Plain. To see our Plant of the Month, travel to lakes with natural vegetated shorelines, or any of the Pine Barren rivers to see this beautiful native wildflower.