

A Dozen Common but Inconspicuous Lichens of the Georgia Piedmont

1. *Anaptychia palmulata*

A minutely foliose, brown, green when wet, lichen found at the base of hardwood trees, occasionally on rocks.

This lichen is usually fertile, that is, disk-shaped apothecia are usually seen on the lichen surface.

Similar species: a larger brown or greenish foliose lichen, *Lobaria quercizans*, that is also usually fertile is sometimes seen growing in the same places.

2. *Caloplaca flavovirescens*

An orange crustose lichen, a crust, that grows on concrete structures.

Orange, brown or reddish splotches on the sidewalk, if they aren't blood stains, are this lichen; through a hand lens, it is seen to be a collection of light orange apothecia on a darker background.

Similar species: a truly inconspicuous lichen, *Lecanora dispersa*, whose thallus grows out of sight, inside the concrete, is only visible as tiny white-rimmed apothecia.

3. *Cladonia strepsilis*

A lichen that forms mounds of olive-brown upright squamules (scale-like "leaves") in rocky places.

On granite outcrops this lichen sometimes becomes detached from where it grew, and blows or washes downhill, where, if it lands upright, continues to grow.

Similar species: *Cladonia mateocyantha* resembles *C. strepsilis* but with larger, greener squamules, and it generally stays put; *Cladonia apodocarpa* with larger green and white squamules, can form extensive patches along roadways.

4. *Heterodermia obscurata*

A medium sized green foliose lichen, with marginal soredia, found on trees and rocks near the ground.

The telling feature of this lichen is its yellow-spotted underside; it is otherwise, pretty plain.

Similar species: *H. speciosa* lacks the yellow spots.

5. *Lecanora strobilina*

A green, pebbly crust that grows on branches, twigs and pine cones, with green apothecia.

A friend of ours, a Georgia State Park Ranger, tells the children he takes on field trips that this is fairy snot.

Similar species: *L. hybocarpa* with reddish apothecia and a white thallus, more often grows on the trunks of trees.

6. *Leptogium cyanescens*

A small foliose grey lichen often covered with tiny isidia, on trees and rocks in shade.

This genus and *Collema* are called gelatinous lichens by some lichenists because when wet their thin lobes become translucent, but dry this feature is not apparent.

Similar species: the *Collema* are much darker, in fact, black; *L. corticola* has a blistered surface; *Coccocarpia palmicola* is also grey but is not gelatinous and has black fuzz on its underside.

7. *Phaeophyscia rubropulchra*

A dark green or brown foliose lichen with marginal soredia and a red medulla.

In stratified lichens, below the cortex or skin of the lichen there is a thin algal layer and then a thicker middle layer above the lower cortex. Sometimes this middle layer, the medulla, is colored and can be seen by scraping off the upper strata, or, often enough, snails or other grazers who eat lichens have exposed the medulla.

Similar species: *P. adiastrata* looks the same but has a white medulla.

8. *Physcia pumilior*

Small, foliose, with many dark apothecia, on sticks and branches.

This lichen can often be found growing on smaller tree branches in the shade of the larger *Parmotrema*s, and *Usneas*.

Similar species: in *P. millegrana*, which is more common northward, the edges of the thallus disintegrate into grainy soredia.

9. *Physcia subtilis*

A small foliose lichen growing on rock in sun or shade, with marginal soredia.

Physcia subtilis can almost always be found on Georgia's granite outcrops and flatrocks with *Xanthoparmelia*.

Similar species: *Myelochroa obsessa* is another saxicolous lichen seen on outcrops; it is isidiate, and has a pale yellow medulla.

10. *Parmelinopsis minarum*

A small green-grey foliose lichen, with isidia.

P. minarum is one of the most common lichens in Georgia; almost every lichen covered tree trunk, outside the most polluted areas, hosts this little fellow.

Similar species: *P. horrescens* has tiny hairs growing straight out of the tops of its cilia, but is otherwise the same.

11. *Pyxine subcinerea*

Yet another small foliose, sorediate bark lichen this one with a yellow medulla.

If, after dark, you shine a UV light into a Piedmont forest, this lichen is suddenly conspicuous, as it glows bright yellow.

Similar species: *P. sorediata*, is less common but more conspicuous, its thallus is more or less covered with pruina, a crystalline dust; its medulla is orange.

12. *Ramalina americana*

Fruticose, yellow-green, on hardwood twigs and branches, apothecia often present.

Ramalinas resemble *Usneas* but the branches are flattened instead of round. *R. americana* seems to be either tiny, less than 3/4 of an inch high, or much bigger, several inches across.

Similar species: *Ramalina stenospora* has narrower lobes more like straps, and is more common towards the coastal plain.