

# Tawny Ironweed

## *Vernonia glauca*

### Description

Tawny Ironweed is a perennial herb that may grow to 5 feet (15 dm) in height. The leaves are alternately-arranged, narrowly egg-shaped to oblong in shape, noticeably paler below, with short-pointed tips and bases that taper to a short petiole. The flowers, which appear from July to October, are purplish and are grouped into dense flowering heads, which are clustered at the top of the stem in a branched, flat or round-topped grouping. This species has lighter-colored bristles at the top of its fruits than does the much more common species *Vernonia noveboracensis*.

### Distribution & Habitat

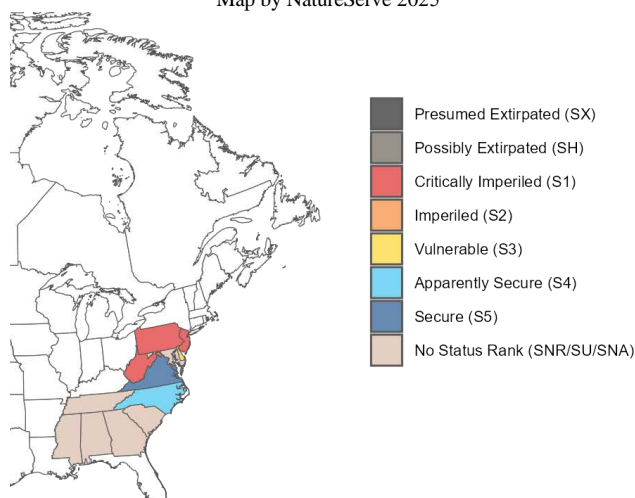
Tawny Ironweed occurs from Pennsylvania and New Jersey south and west into Louisiana and Georgia. In Pennsylvania, it reaches a northern limit of its range and has been documented in a few southeastern counties. It grows in successional clearings, dry fields, and upland forests.



Photo source: PNHP

### North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2025



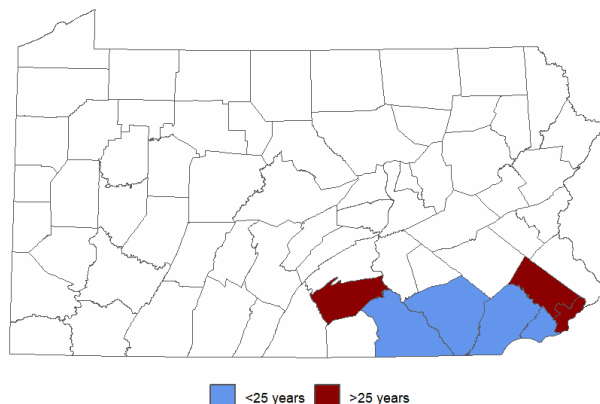
### Conservation Considerations

The currently-known populations of Tawny Ironweed in the state are threatened by human-related habitat loss, natural succession, invasive species, and the indiscriminate spraying of herbicides. Given the preference of the species for open habitats, active management is usually required to maintain the proper successional stage.

### Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey considers Tawny Ironweed to be a species of special concern because of the few occurrences that have been recently confirmed. It has a PA legal rarity status and a PABS suggested rarity status of Endangered. Fewer than 10 populations are currently known from the state.

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### NatureServe conservation status ranks

**G5** – Globally Secure; **S1**– Critically Imperiled in Pennsylvania

### References

- NatureServe. 2025. NatureServe Explorer [web application] NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at <https://explorer.natureserve.org> (Accessed: May 8, 2025)
- Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program. 2025.
- Rhoads, A.F. and W.M. Klein, Jr. 1993. The Vascular Flora of Pennsylvania. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Rhoads, A.F. and T.A. Block. 2007. The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.