

Carolina Leaf-flower

Phyllanthus caroliniensis

Description

Carolina leaf-flower is an erect, sometimes branched, annual herb that may grow to 2 feet (6 dm) in height, but is often much shorter. The leaves are alternately arranged, stalkless, untoothed on the margin, oblong to elliptic in shape, and less than 1 inch (1-2 cm) in length. The tiny flowers, appearing from July to September, occur in the axils of the upper leaves. The fruit is a dry capsule that is about 1/8 inch (1-2 mm) in thickness.

Distribution & Habitat

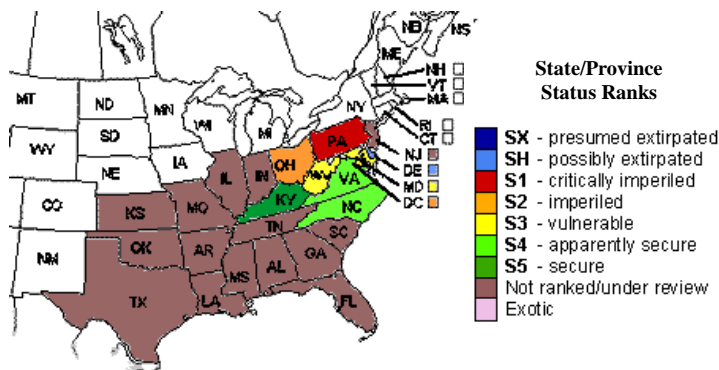
Carolina leaf-flower has a range from New Jersey west into Missouri, and south into the Gulf Coast states. In Pennsylvania, it represents a southerly species and has been documented historically in a few southeastern counties, particularly along the lower Susquehanna River. It grows in various damp to wet open habitats, especially on the shorelines of rivers, streams, and ponds, and may also be found in human-created disturbances that simulate natural habitats.



Photo source: Robert H. Mohlenbrock
@ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database

North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2014



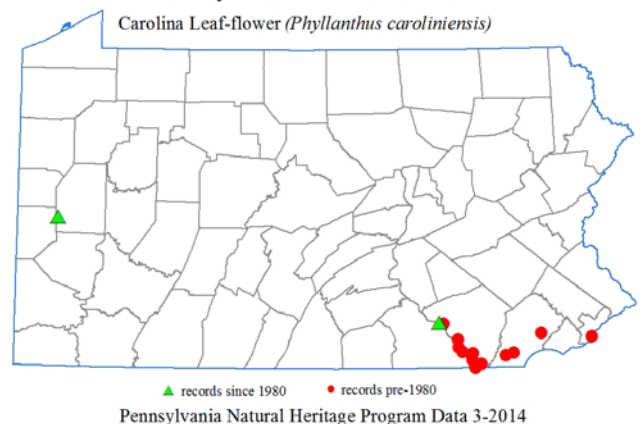
Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers Carolina leaf-flower to be a species of special concern, based on the few occurrences that have been recently confirmed and the wetland habitat. It has a PA legal rarity status and a PABS suggested rarity status of Endangered. Fewer than 5 populations, mostly along the lower Susquehanna River, are known from the state.

Conservation Considerations

The viability of populations of Carolina leaf-flower and its habitat depends on maintaining the natural hydrology and natural condition of the shoreline and islands of the Susquehanna River. This species appears well-adapted to the seasonal fluctuations in water levels, especially the lower water levels of summer and fall when the plant is flowering and fruiting. Invasive species represent a threat to this species and its habitat.

Pennsylvania Distribution



NatureServe conservation status ranks

G5 – Secure globally; **S1** – Critically imperiled in Pennsylvania

References

- NatureServe. 2014. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 6.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>.
- Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program. 2014.
- Rhoads, A.F. and T.B. Block. 2007. The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual. 2nd edition. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.
- Robert H. Mohlenbrock @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / USDA NRCS. 1995. *Northeast wetland flora: Field office guide to plant species*. Northeast National Technical Center, Chester.

