

Three-toothed Cinquefoil

Potentilla tridentata

Description

Three-toothed Cinquefoil is a low-growing evergreen perennial, somewhat woody at the base, which forms small mat-like colonies. While the flowering stalk may reach 6 inches (15 cm) in height, it is often much shorter, and plants may only be an inch or two above the substrate. The leaves have a very distinctive shape and provide the common name of the plant. They are alternately arranged, thick in texture, to 2 inches (5 cm) in length, with the lower part of the stalk with a wing-like fringe, or stipule and the blade portion divided into 3 leaflets, each of which has 3 small teeth at its tip. The leaves often turn red over the winter. The white flowers, which appear from May to July, are grouped in branched clusters at the end of the branchlets. Each individual flower has 5 petals and many stamens. The fruits and seeds are fused together, and are dry, hairy, and less than 1/16 inch (1 mm) in length.



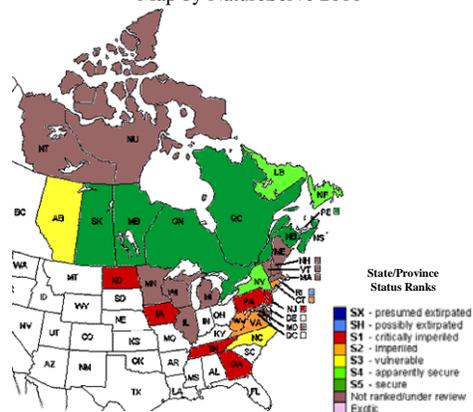
Photo source: Kurt Emmanuele, University of Tennessee Herbarium

Distribution & Habitat

Three-toothed Cinquefoil ranges from Newfoundland to Alberta and south into Georgia, Tennessee, Iowa, and North Dakota. In Pennsylvania, it represents a northerly species and has been documented historically in a few northeastern counties. The species grows on exposed bedrock outcrops, usually at relatively high elevations.

North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2010

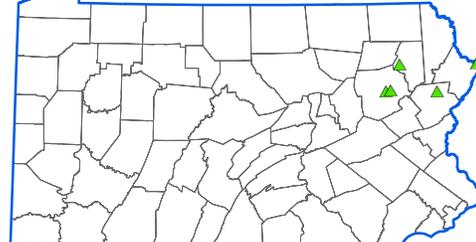


Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers Three-toothed Cinquefoil to be a species of special concern, based on the few locations recently confirmed and the specialized habitat. It has a PA legal rarity status and a PABS suggested rarity status of Endangered.

Pennsylvania Distribution

Potentilla tridentata



▲ records since 1980 ● records pre-1980
Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program Data 3-2011

Conservation Considerations

Although only a few populations of Three-toothed Cinquefoil are known, they are situated in relatively remote areas where the habitat is likely to be kept in a natural state. Active management, such as the use of prescribed fire, may be beneficial in maintaining these areas or in creating additional habitat.

NatureServe conservation status ranks

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

References

- NatureServe. 2011. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>.
- Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program. 2011.
- 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. 2nd edition. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.