

# Limestone Petunia

## *Ruellia strepens*

### Description

Limestone petunia is a perennial herb with hairy-lined stems that can reach 40 inches (1 m) in height. The leaves are oppositely arranged, oval to lance-shaped, variable on the margin and in hairiness, and up to 6 inches (15 cm) long and 2½ inches (6 cm) wide. The flowers, appearing from late June through late July, occur singly or in small clusters in the leaf axils. The blue to purple petals are 1 to 2 inches (3-5 cm) long, with a tube-like base and 5 spreading lobes above. The fruit is a hairless capsule with many seeds.



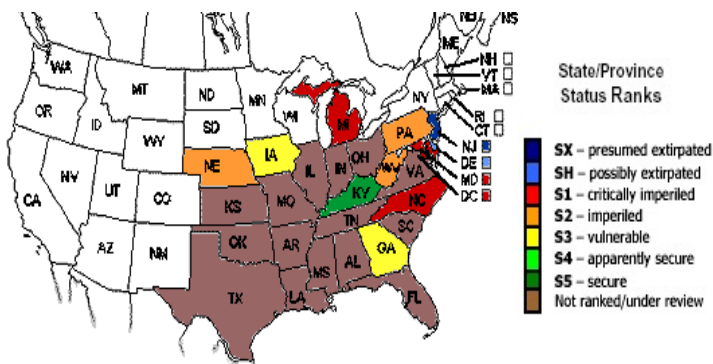
Photo source: R. Harrison Wiegand

### Distribution & Habitat

Limestone petunia has a range from New Jersey west into Nebraska, and south into Texas and the Gulf Coast states. In Pennsylvania, it has been documented historically in numerous southern counties. It grows on wooded hillsides, floodplains, and streambanks, especially on calcareous substrates.

#### North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2007

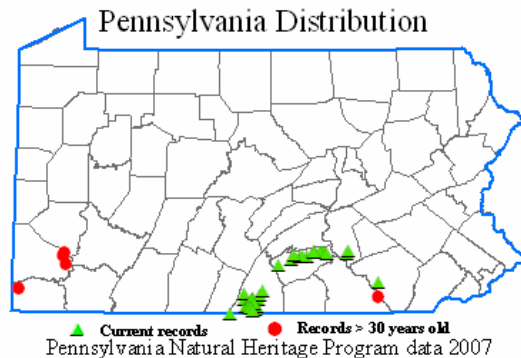


### Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers limestone petunia to be a species of special concern, based on the relatively few occurrences that have been recently confirmed. It has a PA legal rarity status and a PABS suggested rarity status of Threatened. About 35 populations are currently known from the state.

### Conservation Considerations

The viability of populations of limestone petunia and its habitat can be enhanced by maintaining forested conditions on floodplains and streambanks. Invasive species and quarrying represent threats at some locations.



### NatureServe conservation status ranks

G4G5 – Apparently globally secure; S2 – Imperiled in Pennsylvania

### References

- NatureServe. 2006. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 6.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>.
- 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.

