Canby's Mountain Lover (Paxistima canbyi)

Pennsylvania Endangered Plant Species State Rank: S1 (critically imperiled), Global Rank: G2? (imperiled)

Identification

Canby's mountain-lover is a small evergreen shrub, eight to 16 inches high with simple, opposite, leathery leaves less than 1/2-inch long. Very small green flowers with four sepals and four petals arise from upper leaf axils.

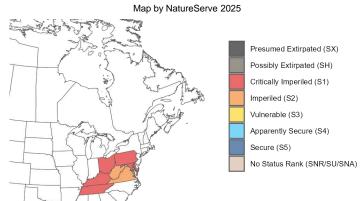
Biology-Natural History

This species belongs to the Staff-Tree Family (Celastraceae). Branches of Canby's mountain lover spread along the ground and sprout roots where soil conditions are favorable. In this way the plant forms colonies which are genetically identical. Flowers open in April and May. A second species of *Paxistima* occurs in the Pacific states.

Habitat

Canby's mountain-lover occurs in rocky well-drained upland woods from Pennsylvania to Ohio, south to North Carolina and eastern Kentucky. Pennsylvania populations are found on west and northwest facing forested slopes, climbing over exposed shale and limestone formations. Southern Pennsylvania is the northern limit of this species' range.

North American State/Province Conservation Status



Management Practices

Canby's mountain-lover is listed as a candidate species for federal listing by the USF&WS. It is also listed as Endangered in Maryland, Ohio and Tennessee and as Threatened in Kentucky and Virginia. Landowners need to be encouraged to protect the plants and habitat. Gardeners should buy only plants rooted from nursery stock.



Reasons for Being Endangered

Canby's mountain-lover is rare throughout its natural range. Two of the three historical Pennsylvania locations have been located, but could be threatened by railroad and quarrying expansions. Used

commercially as an ornamental ground cover, some Canby's mountain-lover being sold by nurseries may have been dug from the wild.

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<25 years

>25 years

References:

NatureServe. 2025. NatureServe Explorer [web application] NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at https:// explorer.natureserve.org (Accessed: May 8, 2025)

Fact Sheet adapted from: Felbaum, Mitchell, et al. Endangered and Threatened Species of Pennsylvania. Harrisburg, PA: Wild Resource Conservation Fund, 1995.