

Ellisia; Waterpod

Ellisia nyctelea

Description

Ellisia is a spring annual herb that grows 4 to 16 inches (1-4 dm) tall. Its stems are light green or light purple and usually hairy along their length. The leaves tend to be oppositely arranged on the lower stem and alternately arranged on the upper stem. The hairy leaves are up to 4 inches (10 cm) long and deeply dissected into toothed lobes. The flowers appear in April and May and grow individually from the upper leaf axils. The ¼ inch (6.5 mm) flowers are whitish-blue and have 5 petal-like lobes that are fused near the base to form a bell shaped flower. The sepals are united near the base and persist on the usually 4-seeded, capsule-like fruit.



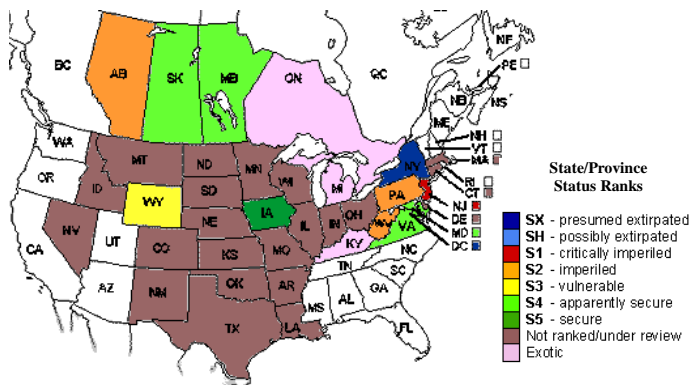
Photo source: Tony Davis (PNHP)

Distribution & Habitat

Ellisia occurs throughout much of the United States, but is apparently absent from northern New England, the Southeast, and the West Coast. In Pennsylvania, it grows on damp, shady stream banks with rich alluvial soils and sometimes in disturbed ground.

North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2014



Current State Status

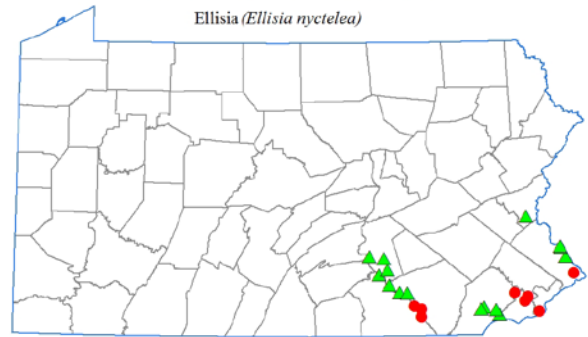
The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers Ellisia to be a species of special concern, based on the relatively few occurrences that have been recently confirmed. It has a PA legal rarity status and a PABS suggested rarity status of Threatened. The rich shady stream banks that Ellisia depends upon are highly influenced by flooding events. Alteration of the natural flood cycle, dam building, increased erosion, and clearing of floodplain forests all affect the quality of suitable habitat. Populations are also threatened by loss of habitat from development and displacement by invasive plants.

Conservation Considerations

Protection of Ellisia will require maintenance of known populations and preservation of rich, shaded stream bank communities. This may include sustaining appropriate hydrology, removal of invasive plants, and establishment of buffers that can moderate the effects of scouring events and run-off. Management of the known sites requires long term monitoring of populations.

Pennsylvania Distribution

Ellisia (Ellisia nyctelea)



▲ records since 1980 ● records pre-1980
Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program Data 3-2014

NatureServe conservation status ranks

G5 – Globally secure; S2 – Imperiled in Pennsylvania

References

- NatureServe. 2014. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>
- Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program. 2014.
- 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.



Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program