Mountain bugbane (Cimicifuga americana)

Pennsylvania Threatened Plant Species State Rank: S3 (vulnerable) Global Rank: G4 (apparently vulnerable)

What it looks like:

Mountain bugbane is a perennial herb that grows from one to one and a half meters tall.

Leaves are compound, with terminal leaflets large, toothed, and deeply cleft; other leaflets oval to wedge-shaped with sharply defined teeth. All leaflets are less than 10 centimeters long.

Flowers: a slender raceme (up to 30 centimeters tall) of tiny white flowers; no petals; short-lived sepals; most conspicuous feature is the spray of many white stamens; strong foul odor attracts flies for pollination; flowers open from base upward on spike. Can be distinguished from the very similar looking species, black bugbane (Cimicifuga racemosa), because it has three or more carpels instead of one, and because of its stalked seed pods.

Where it is found:

Mountain bugbane grows in rich hardwood forests, often in the same habitat as hemlock, on north-facing mountainsides or the wooded corridors that follow mountain streams. It is restricted to the central Appalachians, from Pennsylvania south to Georgia and as far west as Illinois.

Why it is rare:

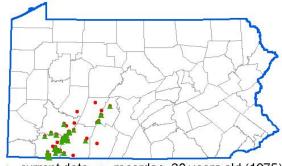
Mountain bugbane is primarily endangered by development of its habitat, but populations have also suffered from harvesting pressure. Although mountain bugbane is not particularly valuable in itself, its similar-looking relative black bugbane is a highly sought-after medicinal herb. Between 300,000 and 500,000 pounds of black bugbane were collected from the wild for sale

in 1999, and some of this was almost certainly mountain bugbane.



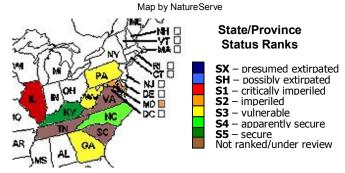
Rita Hawrot, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

Pennsylvania Distribution by County



current data • records > 30 years old (1975) Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program data 2005

North American State/Province Conservation Status



Conservation considerations:

Much is still unknown about where mountain bugbane grows and how secure its existing populations are. Information about how often it is collected with black bugbane would greatly aid conservation efforts. Given present information, habitat conservation is what this species needs most.





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- United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service. 2005. The PLANTS Database [web application]. National Plant Data Center, Baton Rouge, LA 70874-4490 USA. Available at http://plants.usda.gov. Accessed 23 February 2005.