

# Colic-root

## *Aletris farinosa*

### Description

Colic-root is a perennial herb that grows from 1½ to 3 feet (0.5-1 m) in height. The leaves are narrow, lance-shaped, ca 2 to 7 inches (5-18 cm) long, parallel veined, and mostly clustered at the base of the plant. The flowers, appearing from May to July, are relatively and numerous on the middle and upper part of the stem. The individual flowers are whitish, ¼ to 3/8 inch (6-10 mm) long, with six petal-like lobes that have a rough texture, and which persist after blooming time and enclose the capsular fruit.

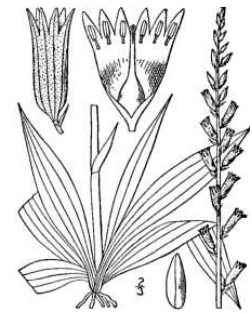


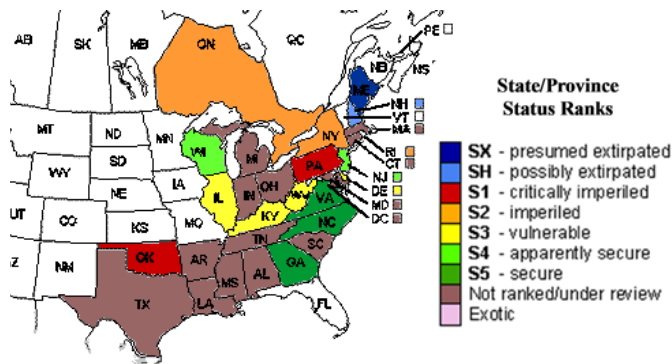
Photo source: USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database

### Distribution & Habitat

Colic-root has a wide range in eastern North America, from Maine west into Wisconsin and south into Texas and the Gulf Coast states. In Pennsylvania, it occurs primarily in the southeastern counties. The species grows in a variety of habitats, including clearings and openings, thickets, open woods, serpentine barrens, and wetlands, especially on sandy or peaty substrates.

### North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2014



### Current State Status

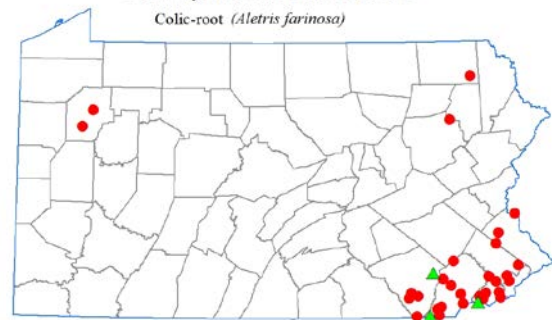
The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers colic-root to be a species of special concern, based on the very few occurrences that have been recently confirmed and its apparent decline in numbers from historical levels. It has a PA legal rarity status of Undetermined, but has been assigned a suggested rarity status of Endangered by PABS. Fewer than 10 populations, mostly with few individuals, are currently known from the state.

### Conservation Considerations

The remaining populations of colic-root in the state are threatened by human-related habitat loss, natural succession, invasive species, and collection by gardeners and herbal medicine enthusiasts. Given the preference of the species for open habitats, active management - such as fire, mowing, or invasive species removal - is often required to maintain the proper successional stage at sites where it grows.

### Pennsylvania Distribution

Colic-root (*Aletris farinosa*)



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

### NatureServe conservation status ranks

G5 – Globally secure; S1 – Critically imperiled in Pennsylvania

### References

- NatureServe. 2014. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 6.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at <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.
- USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. *An illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions*. Vol. 1: 20.

