

Featherbells

Stenanthium gramineum

Description

Featherbells is a showy plant in the lily family (Liliaceae) with a basal rosette of long, strap-shaped leaves and a terminal inflorescence with stalk-less (sessile), white, six-petaled flowers on branches at the base, and directly on the main axis above. It is similar to Virginia bunch-flower (*Melanthium virginicum*, or *Veratrum virginicum*), which differs in having usually wider leaves, and having yellowish petals which have distinct stalks.

Distribution & Habitat

This plant is found from the Mississippi Valley to the Atlantic, from Missouri and Pennsylvania south to extreme eastern Texas and the panhandle of Florida, but absent in much of the southern portion of this range. It flowers in mid summer, and grows in moist, open habitats, often along streams.

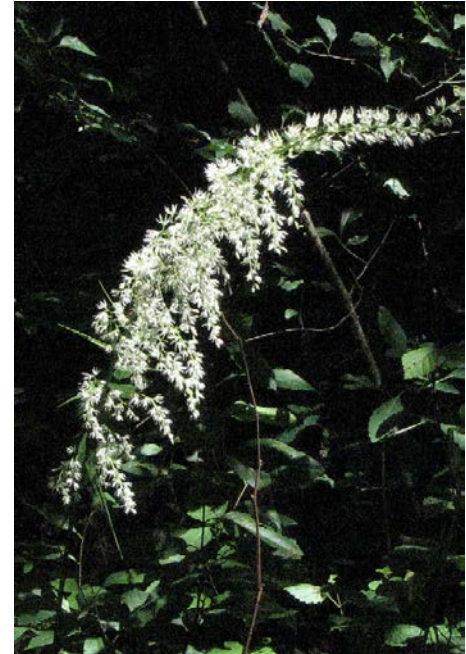
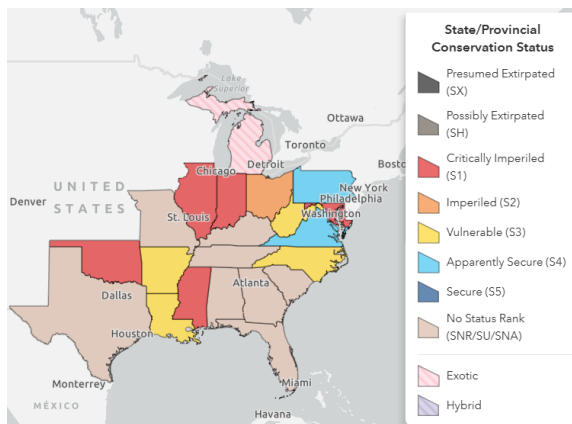


Photo Source: Rocky Gleason (PNHP)

North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2025



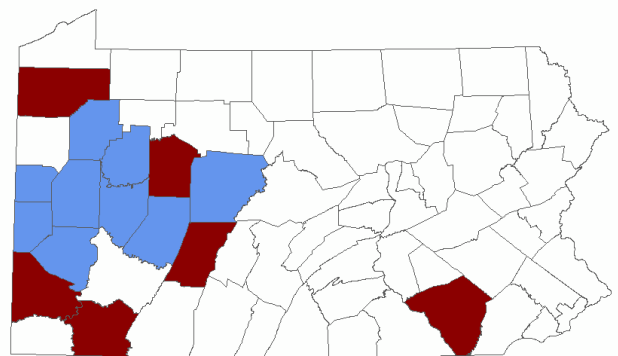
Current State Status

The Pennsylvania Biological Survey has proposed a status of Tentatively Undermined, indicating the need for further fieldwork before assignment of a definite status.

Conservation Considerations

Featherbells grows in natural (and to some extent artificial) disturbance habitats, which makes it particularly vulnerable to exotic invasive species, most notable of which are Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*) and its sister species giant knotweed (*Polygonum sachalinense*). Many of the known populations are small, and thus could be displaced by aggressive non-native plant species. It has been noted that it often does not set fruit, raising concern that pollinators may be scarce.

Featherbells (*Stenanthium gramineum*)



■ <25 years ■ >25 years

NatureServe conservation status ranks: **G4** – Globally apparently secure; **S4** – Apparently secure in Pennsylvania



References

- NatureServe. 2025. NatureServe Explorer [web application] NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at <https://explorer.natureserve.org> (Accessed: May 8, 2025)
- Rhoads, A.F. and T.B. Block. 2007. The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual. 2nd edition. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.