

Creeping Snowberry

Gaultheria hispidula

Description

Creeping Snowberry is a low-growing, matlike, evergreen shrub. All parts of the plant have a wintergreen odor when bruised. The plant may be recognized in any season by its growing habit and its leaves. The leaves are alternately arranged, mostly less than 3/8 inch (1 cm) in length, egg-shaped or rounded, very short-stalked, hairless above and with scattered brownish hairs below. The plants produce flowers and fruits, but these can be a challenge to locate. The flowers, which appear in spring, are greenish/white, only a few millimeters in length, and occur singly along the stem. The fruit is white, berry-like but rather dry, contains many seeds, and is the source of the common name.



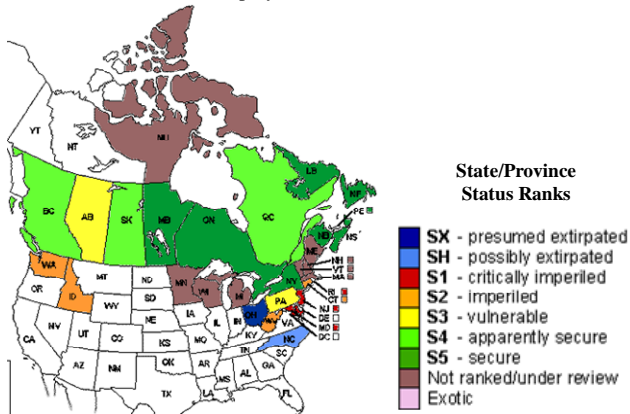
Photo Source: John Kunsman (PNHP)

Distribution & Habitat

Creeping Snowberry has a transcontinental range across the cooler regions of North America. In Pennsylvania, it represents a northerly species and has been documented historically in the northern counties. The species grows on decaying logs, stumps, and moss hummocks in bogs, peaty wetlands, and swamps.

North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2010

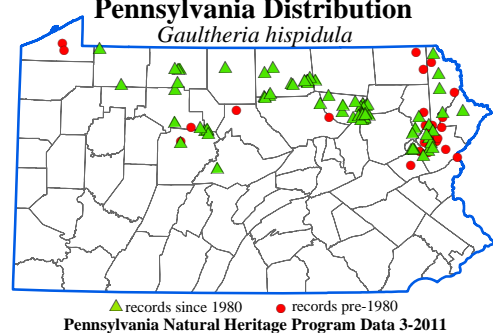


Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers Creeping Snowberry to be a species of special concern, based on the moderate number of locations recently confirmed and the wetland habitat. It has a PA legal rarity status and a PABS suggested rarity status of Rare.

Pennsylvania Distribution

Gaultheria hispidula



Conservation Considerations

The viability of populations of Creeping Snowberry and its habitat may be enhanced by creating buffers and protecting the natural hydrology around wetlands and controlling invasive species.

NatureServe conservation status ranks

G5 – Globally secure; S3 – Vulnerable in Pennsylvania

References

- NatureServe. 2011. 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. 2011.
- 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.

