

Harbinger-of-spring

Erigenia bulbosa

Description

Harbinger-of-spring is a delicate perennial herb with a weak, hairless stem that may grow up to 6 inches (15 cm) in height. The hairless leaves are subdivided into numerous linear or narrowly oblong leaflets. This species represents one of the earliest-blooming wildflowers in Pennsylvania, with the flowers generally appearing from March into early April. The tiny individual flowers occur in small clusters at the end of a long stalk. Each flower has 5 white petals that are only about 1/8 of an inch (3-4 mm) in length, and contrast noticeably with the blackish anthers. The tiny fruit breaks into 2 sections at maturity. The leaves and stem usually die back to the ground in June.



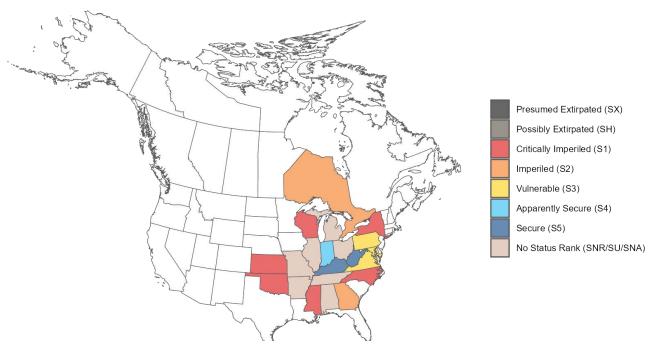
Photo source: John Kunsman (PNHP)

Distribution & Habitat

Harbinger-of-spring has a range from southern Canada south into the Great Lakes states and the Middle Atlantic states. In Pennsylvania, it has been documented historically in several western and southeastern counties. It grows on wooded slopes, floodplain forests, and in rich woodlands.

North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2025



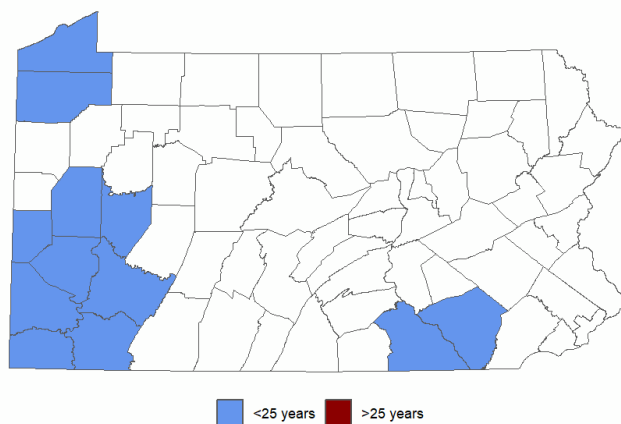
Conservation Considerations

The known populations of harbinger-of-spring have threats from habitat loss, invasive species, and in some locations, excessive browsing by deer. Establishing buffers around fragmented forested habitat and removal of invasive species will help to maintain populations.

Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey considers harbinger-of-spring to be a species of special concern, based on the relatively few occurrences that have been recently documented. It has a PA legal rarity status of Threatened and a PABS suggested rarity status of Rare. About 40 populations are currently known from the state.

Harbinger-of-spring (*Erigenia bulbosa*)



NatureServe conservation status ranks

G5 – Secure globally; S3 – Vulnerable in Pennsylvania



References

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