

# Hispid Gromwell (*Lithospermum croceum*)

## Pennsylvania Endangered Plant Species

State Rank: S1 (critically imperiled), Global Rank: G4G5T4T5 (apparently secure)

### Identification

Hispid gromwell is an herbaceous perennial. It sends up erect stems, one to two feet high, from a stout woody root. The 1- to 3-inch narrow leaves are rough-hairy. The bright orange-yellow, funnel-shaped flowers, 1/2 to 1-inch wide, are produced in terminal leafy racemes, and are very conspicuous.

### Biology-Natural History

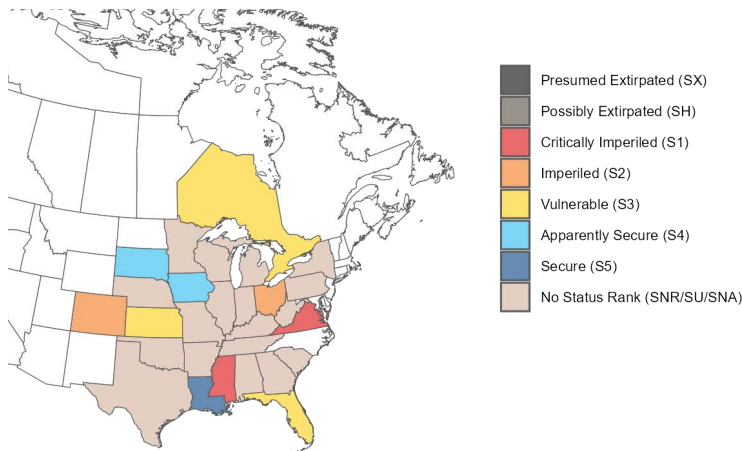
The genus *Lithospermum* belongs to the Borage Family (*Boraginaceae*). This species was originally found from Missouri, Kansas and Montana, south to Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas and Florida. Populations around the Great Lakes are sometimes considered a separate species from their southern relations, but the differences are very minor. A purple dye can be made from the taproot, so the plant is sometimes destroyed by collectors. Hispid gromwell blooms from May to July. Studies by Mercyhurst College in Erie show that the plant is pollinated by several insects, but was most often visited by *Poanes hobomok*, the northern golden skipper.



Credit: Cleveland Museum of Natural History

### North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2025



### Habitat

This species grows on sandy dry sites of shores and coastal plains of the Great Lakes. In the southern part of its range, the hispid gromwell grows in sandy fields, barrens and roadsides. It can also be found in pine barrens and sandy woods from Virginia to Florida.

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blue <25 years red >25 years

### Reasons for Being Endangered

Although the species is secure in other parts of its range, hispid gromwell is endangered in Pennsylvania because only one population occurs here, within Presque Isle State Park. Results of studies identify deer browse, not the lack of pollinators, as the principal threat to the plants. Deer, recreational activities, exotic plant invasion and beach erosion control measures have damaged these plants in the past and continue to pose a threat to the populations.

### Management Practices

The Bureau of State Parks has classified the locations on Presque Isle where this species can be found as "environmentally sensitive areas." As such, management activities to protect this and other plants species of special concern will be implemented



Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program

### References:

- NatureServe. 2025. NatureServe Explorer [web application] NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at <https://explorer.natureserve.org> (Accessed: May 8, 2025)

Fact Sheet adapted from: Felbaum, Mitchell, et al. Endangered and Threatened Species of Pennsylvania. Harrisburg, PA: Wild Resource Conservation Fund, 1995.

