

# Showy Skullcap *Scutellaria serrata*

## Description

Showy skullcap is a perennial herb that grows up to 2 feet (6 dm) in height. The leaves are oppositely arranged with a well developed stalk, toothed on the margin, more-or-less hairless, broadly lance-shaped to egg-shaped, pointed at the tip, and 2 to 4 inches (5-10 cm) in length. The blue flowers, appearing in May and June, are arranged in pairs at the top of the stem. The individual petals are fused into a tube-like structure that is about 1 inch (2.5 cm) in length. The common name refers to the cap-like appendage that is present on the calyx of the flower. Although a member of the mint family, this species does not have the characteristic odor often found in that family.

## Distribution & Habitat

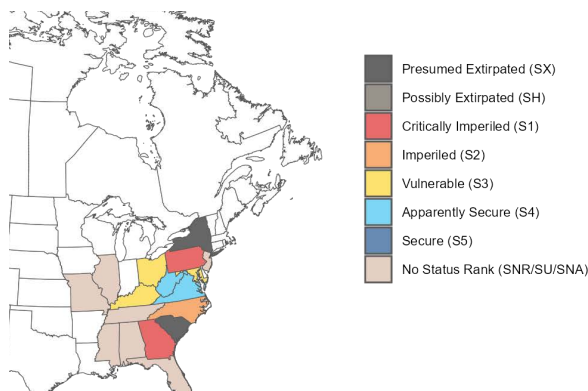
Showy skullcap has a range from New York south and west into Florida and Missouri. In Pennsylvania, it has been documented historically in a few southeastern counties. It grows in moist woods and on floodplains and rich slopes.



Photo source: Sally Ray (PNHP)

## North American State/Province Conservation Status

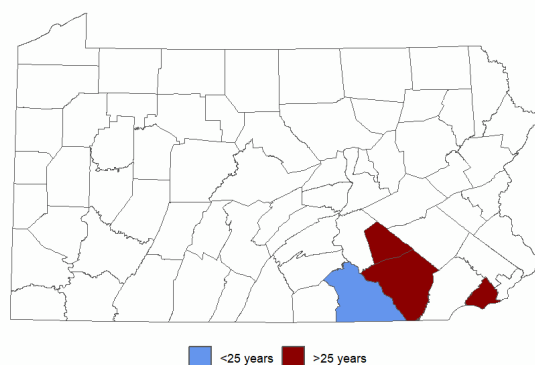
Map by NatureServe 2025



## Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey considers showy skullcap to be a species of special concern, based on the relatively few occurrences that have been recently documented and small state range. It has a PA legal rarity status of Extirpated, but has been assigned a suggested rarity status of Endangered by PABS. Fewer than 5 populations are currently known from the state.

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## Conservation Considerations

The known populations of showy skullcap 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. This species is very attractive in flower and may be subjected to picking or digging by gardeners.

## NatureServe conservation status ranks

G4G5 – Globally secure; S1– Critically imperiled in Pennsylvania

## References

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

