

Purple Bedstraw *Galium latifolium*

Description

Purple bedstraw is a perennial herb with erect to reclining, 4-sided stems that can reach up to 2 feet (6 dm) long. The leaves are 1 to 2 inches (3 to 6 cm) long, widest near the base and tapering to the tip, have 3 prominent veins, and are arranged in whorls of 4 along the stem. The flowers, which are very small and have four purple lobes with long pointed tips, bloom from June to July and are arranged in open, branched clusters that grow from the upper stem nodes. The $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (3-4 mm), round fruits can have a smooth or grainy surface, distinguishing them from related species of bedstraw that have bristly fruits.



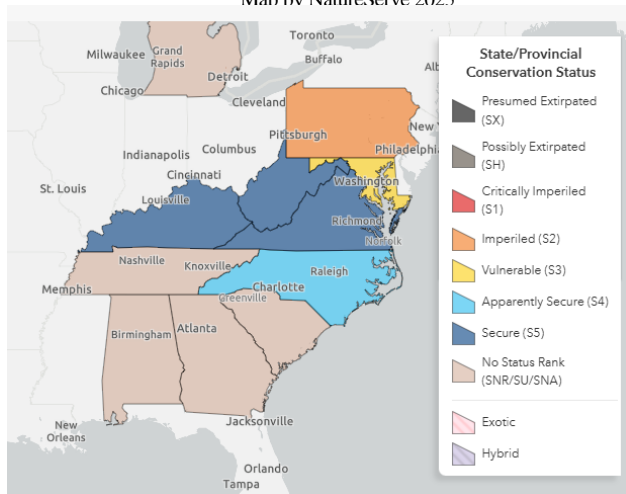
photo source: John Kunsman (PNHP)

Distribution & Habitat

Purple bedstraw has a distribution mostly in the Appalachian area, from Pennsylvania south into Georgia and Alabama. In Pennsylvania, most occurrences are in the south-central counties in the Ridge and Valley province. The species grows in dryish to moist woodlands, especially on shale and sandstone substrate.

North American State/Province Conservation Status

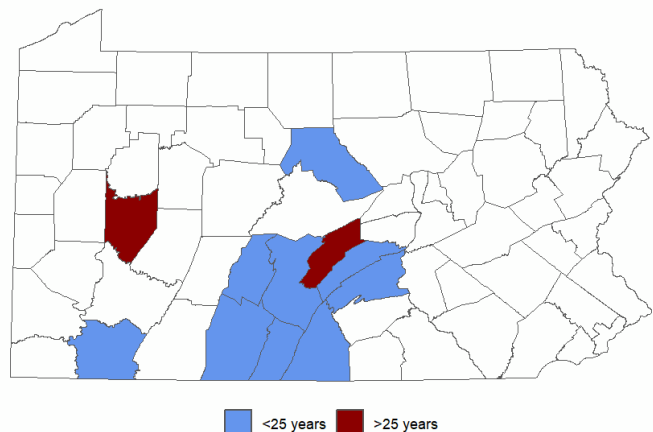
Map by NatureServe 2025



Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey considers purple bedstraw to be a species of special concern, based on the relatively few occurrences that have been confirmed. It has been assigned a rarity status of Undetermined, meaning that more information is needed before a more definitive rarity status can be designated.

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Conservation Considerations

More field surveys are needed to determine the range, abundance, and ecological requirements of the purple bedstraw before a more definite conservation status, if needed, can be assigned.

NatureServe conservation status ranks

G5 – Globally secure; S2 –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 W. M. Klein, Jr. 1993. The Vascular Flora of Pennsylvania: Annotated Checklist and Atlas. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.
- Rhoads, A. F. and T. A. Block. 2000. The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.