

# Appalachian Beard-tongue

## *Penstemon canescens*

### Description

The Appalachian beard-tongue is a perennial, hairy-stemmed herb from 1 to 2 feet (40-80 cm) in height. The leaves are oppositely arranged, hairy, toothed on the margin, and at least the upper pairs of leaves lack distinct leaf stalks. The flowers are pale purplish and appear in late May and early June. The flowers have a two-lipped appearance, and an open throat that allows the entrance of pollinating insects. The name “beardtongue” refers to a sterile stamen that is covered with hairs. The fruit is a many-seeded capsule.

### Distribution & Habitat

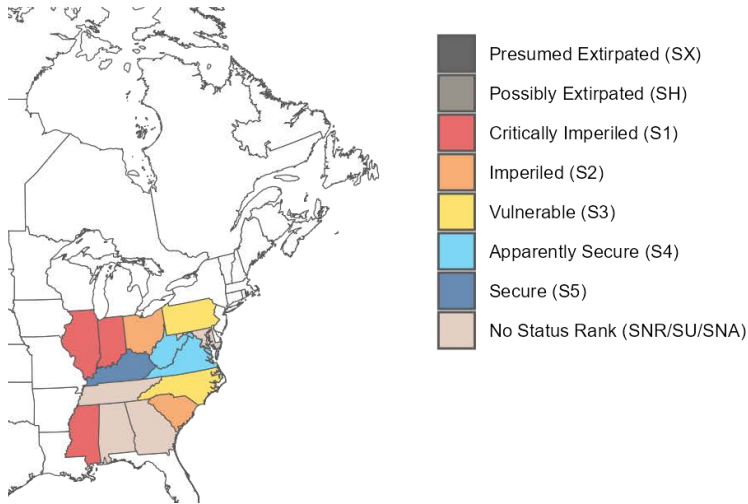
As the common name implies, this species has its main distribution in the Appalachian Mountains. In Pennsylvania, most of the known occurrences are located in the southcentral counties. The species grows in open woods, woodland borders, banks, cliffs, and rocky slopes, particularly on shale substrate.



Photo source: John Kunsman (PNHP)

### North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2025



### Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers Appalachian beardtongue to be a species of special concern, based on the relatively few occurrences that have been recently confirmed. It does not have a PA legal rarity status, but has been assigned a suggested rarity status of Undetermined by PABS, meaning that more information is needed before a more definitive rarity status can be designated.

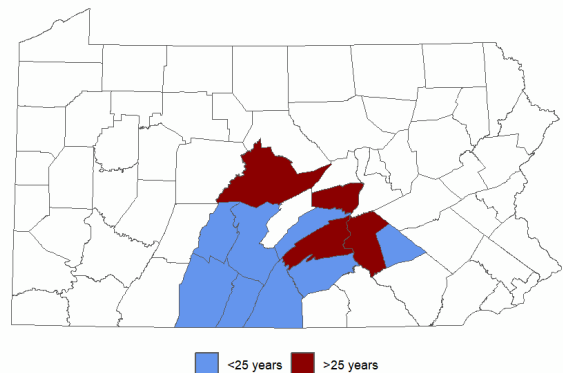
### Conservation Considerations

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

### NatureServe conservation status ranks

G4 – Apparently globally secure; S3 – Vulnerable in Pennsylvania

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### References

- NatureServe. 2014. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>.
- Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program. 2014.
- 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.

