

# Checkered Rattlesnake-plantain

## *Goodyera tessellata*

### Description

Checkered Rattlesnake-plantain is a perennial herb that may grow up to 1 foot (0.3 m) in height, but is often much smaller. The leaves, except for a few very small scales on the stem, are clustered in a rosette of 3-7 at the base of the plant. The veins of the leaf blades, particularly the lateral veins and their branches, are outlined in white. This pattern contrasts with a similar looking, but much more common and widespread species of Rattlesnake-plantain, *Goodyera pubescens*, which has the white coloration especially prominent on the midvein and less so on the lateral veins. Otherwise, the blades of *G. tessellata* are green, elliptic or egg shaped, untoothed on the edges, thick in texture, relatively short-stalked, and mostly 1-3 inches (2.5-7.5 cm) in length. The white flowers, which appear in July and August, are scattered in an alternate arrangement on the middle and upper part of the somewhat sticky-hairy stem. The flower parts are complex, with the lowermost petal, or lip, having a spout-like tip. The fruit is a dry capsule with many minute seeds.



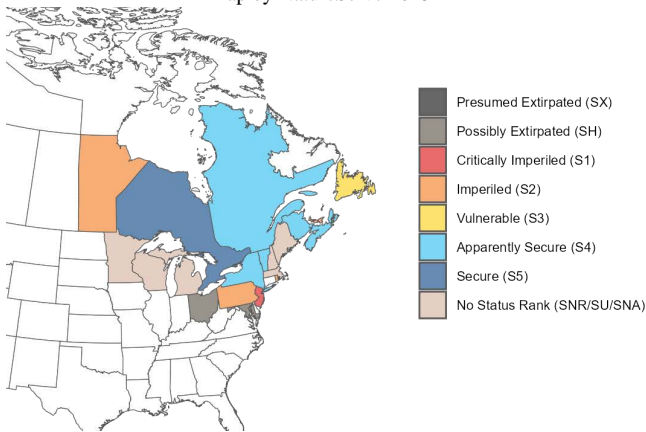
Photo source: John Kunsman (PNHP)

### Distribution & Habitat

Checkered Rattlesnake-plantain ranges from Newfoundland to Manitoba and south into New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and the Great Lakes states. In Pennsylvania, it represents a northerly species and has been documented historically in a few central and northern counties. The species grows in dry to moist upland woods, often with conifers being a substantial component of the tree canopy.

### North American State/Province Conservation Status

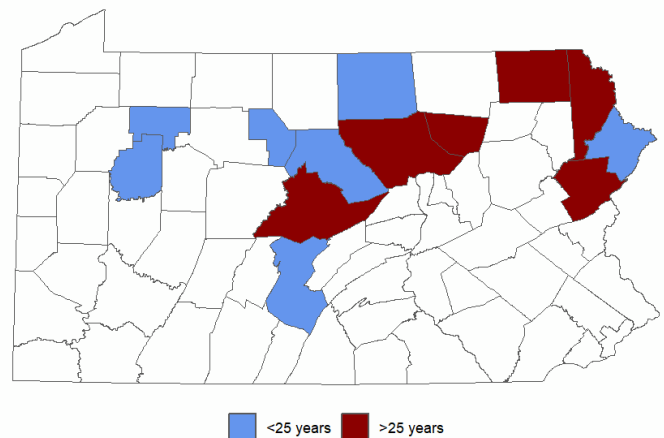
Map by NatureServe 2025



### Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers Checkered Rattlesnake-plantain to be a species of special concern, based on the few locations recently confirmed and the mostly small population sizes. It has a PA legal rarity status of Endangered and a PABS suggested rarity status of Threatened.

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### Conservation Considerations

The viability of populations of Checkered Rattlesnake-plantain and its habitat may be enhanced by providing a forested buffer around populations and controlling invasive species. Excessive deer browse may be a threat at some locations.

### 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. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- 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, Pennsylvania.