

Wild-oat (*Chasmanthium latifolium*)

Pennsylvania Plant Specie of Concern

State Rank: S1 (critically imperiled) Global Rank: G5 (secure)

What it looks like:

Wild-oat is a colonial grass growing from stout rhizomes (underground stems). Individual stems are 1-1.5 meters tall.

Leaves are about 10 centimeters long and one or two centimeters wide, with slightly pronounced middle veins.

Flowers appear in late June and are borne in flat, wide, green, showy spikelets 1.5-4 cm long by .5-1.5 cm wide. Each spikelet contains 6-17 flowers. The spikelets terminate slender pedicels in drooping inflorescences. The inflorescence turns tan in the fall.



Similar species:

Slender sea-oats (*Chasmanthium laxum*) is rare in eastern Pennsylvania. Its erect inflorescence easily distinguishes it from the droopy wild-oat.

Where it is found:

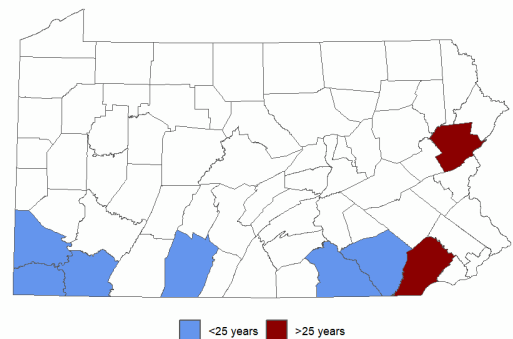
Wild-oat grows on river- and stream banks and in moist woodlands. Its range extends from southern NY to IA and south to TX and northern FL.

Why it is rare:

Much of the floodplain habitat formerly occupied by wild-oat has been converted to agriculture, industry, and housing. The remaining habitat has been impacted by damming of rivers, which

Pennsylvania distribution

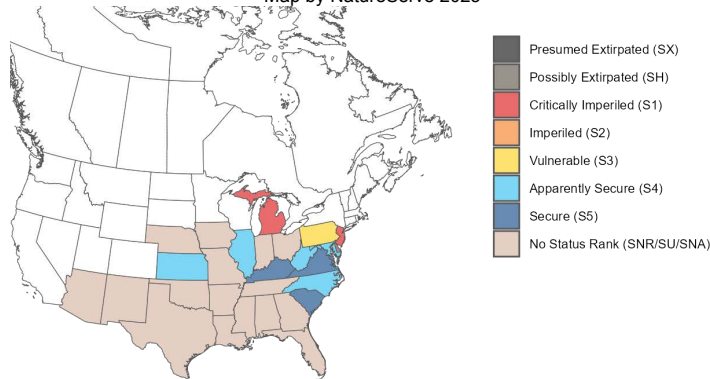
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alters the natural flooding regime, and by invasive exotic species. Wild-oat is critically imperiled in Pennsylvania, at the northeastern edge of its natural range; the species is more secure to the south and west.

North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2025



Management considerations:

Wild-oat colonies may be impacted flood regime modifications and timber harvesting. It is also threatened by competition from aggressive non-native species such as Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*) and Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*).



Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program

References

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- Sanchez-Ken, J. G. and L. G. Clark. 2003. *Chasmanthium*. Pp 344-348 in Flora of North America Editorial Committee, eds. 1993+. *Flora of North America North of Mexico*, Vol. 25. New York and Oxford.