Natural Heritage &
Endangered Species
Program

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Division of Fisheries & Wildlife
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THREATENED SPECIES OF MASSACHUSETTS

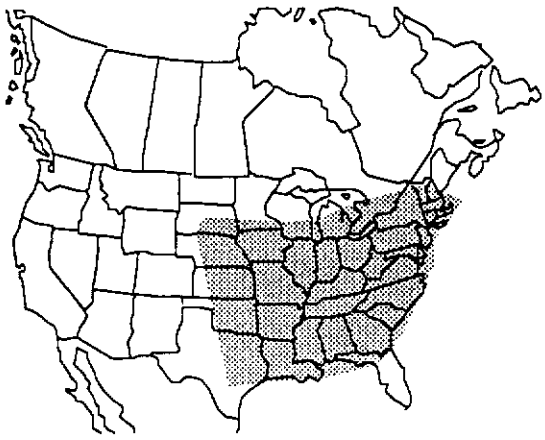
CANADIAN SANICLE
(*Sanicula canadensis* L.)

Gleason, H. A. The New Britton and Brown Illustrated Flora of the U.S. & Adjacent Canada. NY Botanical Garden, 1952.

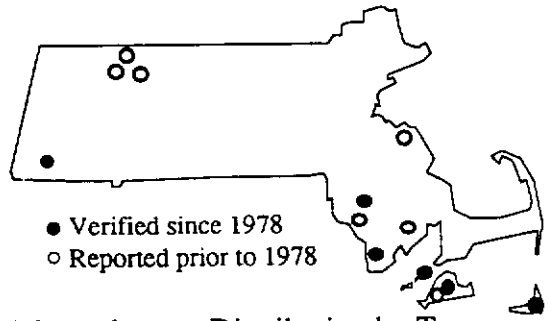
DESCRIPTION: Canadian sanicle is a fibrous-rooted, herbaceous biennial in the Parsley family (Apiaceae or Umbelliferae) found in deciduous forests. This species grows up to 7.5 dm (3 ft.) in height. Longer branches fork two to three times. The doubly serrate, palmately compound (with leaflets radiating out from a central point) leaves are three-parted but may appear five-parted due to deep lobing on the two lateral leaflets. Inconspicuous greenish or whitish flowers are arranged in umbels (rather flat-topped group of flowers in which all the flowers arise from a single point) with rays of differing lengths. The small, approximately globe-shaped fruits are borne in groups of three on 1–1.5 mm (1/25–2/25 in.) long pedicels (flower stalks). The styles (usually slender, stalk-like portions of the pistils) are shorter than the hooked bristles that cover the fruit, suggesting the plant's alternative common name of short-styled snakeroot. The plant's anthers (uppermost portions of the stamens) are white. Canadian sanicle fruits from June through September.

RANGE: The range of Canadian sanicle has been documented as occurring from southern Ontario, New Hampshire and Massachusetts to southern Minnesota and South Dakota, and south to Florida and Texas.

SIMILAR SPECIES IN MASSACHUSETTS: Similar species include the other snakeroots that occur in our area—black snakeroot (*Sanicula marilandica*), long-styled snakeroot (*S. gregaria*), and long-fruited snakeroot (*S. trifoliata*). Long-styled snakeroot differs in its bright yellow anthers (male pollen producing part of the plant), yellowish-green flowers, and the fact that its style exceeds its fruit bristles in length. Black snakeroot also has styles that are longer than the fruit bristles. The pistillate, or female, flowers of long-fruited snakeroot differ from those of Canadian snakeroot in having no stalks. In addition, the sepals (outer leaf covering of flower) of long-fruited snakeroot form a conspicuous beak at the top of the fruit.



Documented Range of Canadian Sanicle



Massachusetts Distribution by Town

HABITAT IN MASSACHUSETTS: Canadian sanicle is a plant of moist or dry, open woods. This species appears to occur in a variety of deciduous forest types, but it seems to prefer mesic slopes in stream valleys or lake margins. Habitats in Massachusetts include low knolls in a red maple swamp and a rocky, mesic hardwood forest. Among the plant species associated with Canadian sanicle are Indian cucumber root (*Medeola virginiana*) and various species of aster (*Aster* spp.), maple (*Acer* spp.), and hickory (*Carya* spp.). Rare Massachusetts plants that have been found with Canadian sanicle include gypsywort (*Lycopus rubellus*).

POPULATION STATUS: Canadian sanicle is presently listed as "Threatened" in Massachusetts. As with all species listed in Massachusetts, individuals of the species are protected from take (picking, collecting, killing...) and sale under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act. There are seven current stations (discovered or relocated since 1978) in six towns and eight historical stations (unverified since 1978) in the Commonwealth. (Both a current and a historical station occur in Nantucket and are represented by a single, solid dot.) Canadian sanicle is also considered rare in Minnesota, New Hampshire, and Vermont.

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS: As with most rare plants, exact needs for management of Canadian sanicle are not known. The following advice comes from observations of the populations in Massachusetts. Canadian sanicle prefers deep light sandy loam of high pH and is most vigorous where there are some sunny openings. The soil should be somewhat moist, but not wet or poorly drained. This sanicle is a biennial, producing two leaves the first year, and flowering the next. Preservation of large areas of its habitat is important as it relies on being able to seed into other appropriate suitable sites in order to survive.

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