



**Natural Heritage  
& Endangered Species  
Program**

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*Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife*

**Downy Wood-mint  
*Blephilia ciliata*  
(L.) Benth.**

State Status: **Endangered**  
Federal Status: **None**

**DESCRIPTION:** Downy Wood-mint, a member of the mint family (Labiatae or Lamiaceae), stands 30-60 cm (1-2 feet) tall with a closely pubescent (hairy) stem. The nearly odorless principal leaves measure 3-6 cm (1.2-2.4 inches) long, are almost sessile (without a stalk), are narrowed at their base, and are whitish-downy beneath. In contrast, leaves of vegetative offshoots have long petioles (stalks to the leaf blade) and are nearly elliptical or oval. The calyx (outer floral envelope) is two-lipped and bilaterally symmetrical with three spine-tipped teeth on the upper side and two shorter blunter teeth on the lower side. The 11-14-mm long corollas are hairy and pink to bluish with purple spots, and are arranged in 1-5 whorls on the upper part of the stem. Each whorl has at its base a row of fringed, colorful bracts. *Blephilia ciliata* gets its name from the Greek *blepharis* (the eyelash) in reference to the hairy fringe of the bracts.

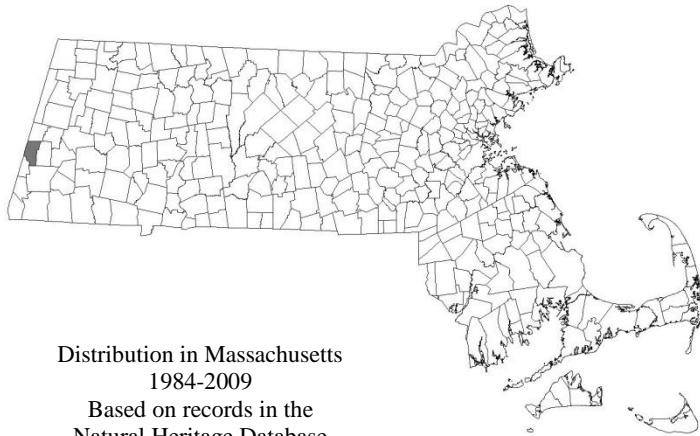


Photo by Jennifer Garrett, NHESP

**SIMILAR SPECIES:** *B. ciliata* resembles Hairy Wood-mint (*B. hirsuta*), but *B. hirsuta* is often taller, has whitish flowers, narrower bracts, a shorter, lower calyx, and the lobes don't reach the upper sinuses. Wild Basil (*Satureja vulgaris*) is often mistaken for Downy Wood-mint and can be found in the same habitat. It is usually no more than 1 foot tall, has uniformly pink to rosy flowers, and the whorls lack the colorful bracts.

**A Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Massachusetts State Wildlife Action Plan**

**Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife**

1 Rabbit Hill Rd., Westborough, MA; tel: 508-389-6300; fax: 508-389-7890; [www.mass.gov/dfw](http://www.mass.gov/dfw)

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**RANGE:** Downy Wood-mint occurs from Massachusetts to southern Michigan and Wisconsin, south to Georgia, Mississippi, and Arkansas.

**HABITAT:** Downy Wood-mint is usually found in moist or dry regenerating woods, thickets, and openings with open-filtered light. One subpopulation in Massachusetts is in open woods on a thickety edge of a trail with a canopy of White Ash, White Pine, and Quaking Aspen; a shrub border of Dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*), Speckled Alder (*Alnus rugosa*), and Wild Grape (*Vitis* sp.); and many herbs and weedy species: Sweet Clover (*Melilotus*), Goldenrod (*Solidago*), Horse Mint (*Monarda*), Tinker’s Weed (*Triosteum*), and Wind-flower (*Anemone*). Another subpopulation is found in an abandoned quarry, in an open, grassy, weedy strip with similar associated plants.

**THREATS:** Forest succession, which may shade out Downy Wood-mint, poses a threat to the existing population in Massachusetts. Downy Wood-mint is listed as rare in Canada, Delaware, Iowa, Illinois, Maryland, New York, and Vermont.

**FLOWERS PRESENT:**

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

Updated 2015

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