



## Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

[www.mass.gov/nhesp](http://www.mass.gov/nhesp)

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

## Northern Mountain-ash *Sorbus decora* (Sarg.) Schneider

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

**DESCRIPTION:** Northern Mountain-ash may be either a tall shrub or a small tree that grows up to 10 m tall and has long pinnately compound leaves. Leaflets are sharply serrate, narrowly oblong, and end in a short sharp point; they are 4 to 7 cm (1.6 - 2.8 in) long, dark blue-green above and pale underneath. Small, white, five-petalled flowers (1 cm wide [about 0.5 in]) are in broad flat-topped clusters with the inflorescence 6 to 15cm (2.4-6 in) wide. The fruits are bright reddish-orange, 8 to 10 mm wide, and arranged in clusters.

### SIMILAR SPECIES IN MASSACHUSETTS:

American Mountain-ash (*Sorbus americana*) closely resembles Northern Mountain-ash and is fairly widespread on Massachusetts rocky summits. American Mountain-ash differs from Northern Mountain-ash by its medium-green leaflets which are relatively longer, narrower, and much more sharply pointed. The fruits of American Mountain-ash are noticeably smaller (4-6 mm) and the flowering period is about 2 weeks later than Northern Mountain-ash. Finally, Northern Mountain-ash has a more rounded overall shape than American Mountain-ash.

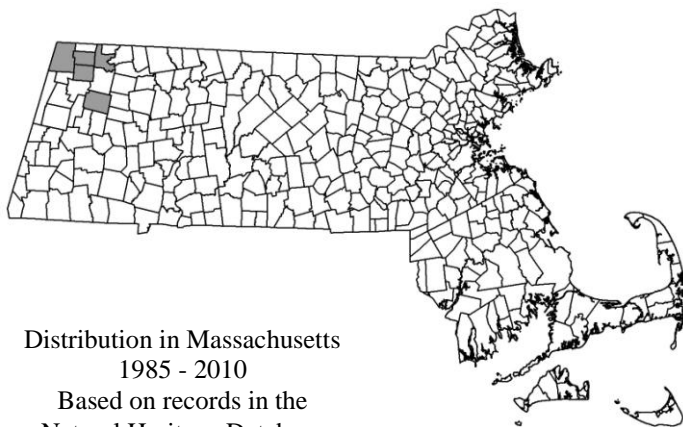


UGA1219234



UGA1219232

Northern Mountain-ash inflorescence and cluster of reddish-orange fruits. Photos: Bill Cook, Michigan State University, Bugwood.org



Distribution in Massachusetts  
1985 - 2010  
Based on records in the  
Natural Heritage Database

**HABITAT IN MASSACHUSETTS:** Northern Mountain-ash grows on mountain slopes in moist or dry rocky soils in northern hardwoods-spruce or spruce-fir forests. In Massachusetts, it is found at higher elevations occurring in thickets, open summits, and along trails and other clearings in forests. Several of the sites are seasonally wet. Usual associates include Red Spruce (*Picea rubens*), Balsam Fir (*Abies balsamea*), Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*), Yellow Birch (*Betula*

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

## Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

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Please allow the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program to continue to conserve the biodiversity of Massachusetts with a contribution for 'endangered wildlife conservation' on your state income tax form, as these donations comprise a significant portion of our operating budget.

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*alleganiensis*), American Mountain-ash, Hobblebush (*Viburnum lantanoides*), Mountain Maple (*Acer spicatum*), Mountain Holly (*Ilex mucronata*), Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*), and Choke Cherry (*P. virginiana*). Herbaceous associates include Bluebead-lily (*Clintonia borealis*), Mountain Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis montana*), Spinulose Wood-fern (*Dryopteris carthusiana*), Cinnamon Fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*), Hay-scented Fern (*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*), Gold Thread (*Coptis trifolia*), Canada Mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*), and Creeping Snowberry (*Gaultheria hispidula*), with the graminoids Common Hairgrass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*), New England Sedge (*Carex novae-angliae*), and Porcupine Sedge (*C. hystericina*).

**RANGE:** Northern Mountain Ash is distributed from Newfoundland west to Minnesota and south to Massachusetts, New York, and Iowa. Along the southern extent of the range, it is listed as rare in Vermont, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, and is presumed extirpated in Indiana. NatureServe ranks Northern Mountain-ash as G4G5, Apparently Secure.

**POPULATION STATUS:** Northern Mountain-ash is listed as Endangered under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act. All listed species are protected from killing, collecting, possessing, or sale and from activities that would destroy habitat and thus directly or indirectly cause mortality or disrupt critical behaviors. All current and historic sites are in northern Berkshire County: four locations are considered current (1985-2010); two other historical sites have not been reverified. The species is at the southern limit of its range in Massachusetts, which in part accounts for its rarity here.

**MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:** Current populations are of scattered individuals and are vulnerable to recreational development and succession. All active management of rare plant populations (including invasive species removal) is subject to review under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act, and should be planned in close consultation with the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program.

**Phenology in Massachusetts:**

**Flowering time in Massachusetts**

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

**Fruiting time in Massachusetts**

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

**REFERENCES:**

NatureServe. 2010. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. (Accessed: December 9, 2010 ).

USDA, NRCS. 2010. The PLANTS Database (<http://plants.usda.gov>, 8 December 2010). National Plant Data Center, Baton Rouge, LA 70874-4490 USA. <http://www.plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=SOE3>

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