



**Natural Heritage  
& Endangered Species  
Program**

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*Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife*

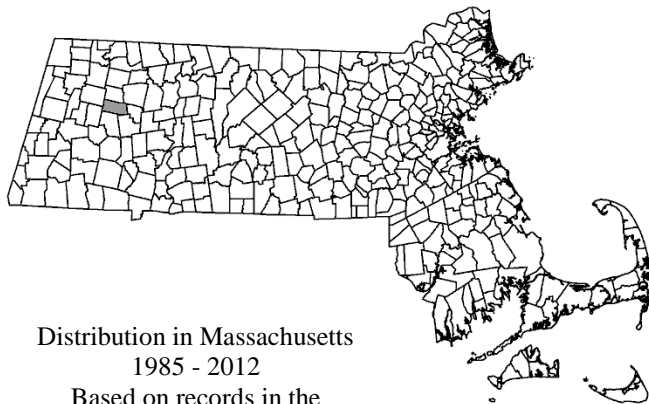
**Purple Giant Hyssop  
*Agastache scrophulariifolia*  
(Willd.) Kuntze**

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

**DESCRIPTION:** Purple Giant Hyssop is an aromatic perennial species in the Mint family (Lamiaceae) found in rich, moist woods and along river banks. It is currently known from only one location in Massachusetts. Purple Giant Hyssop has four-sided stems that are diamond-shaped in cross-section, with opposite, toothed leaves. The flower stems reach 1 to 1.5 m in height (~ 3–5 feet), branch near the top, and have terminal spike-like inflorescences up to 15 cm in length, with tubular purplish flowers.

**AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION:** A technical key should be used to distinguish Purple Giant Hyssop from other mint species. Distinguishing characteristics include:

- Tall stature (1–1.5 m)
- Anise-like fragrance of crushed leaves
- Stem diamond-shaped in cross-section
- Long, spike-like inflorescence with crowded, purple flowers.



Distribution in Massachusetts  
1985 - 2012  
Based on records in the  
Natural Heritage Database



*Photo by R.W. Smith*

**Flowering in Massachusetts**

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

**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)

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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**SIMILAR SPECIES:** Purple Giant Hyssop is the only native *Agastache* species in Massachusetts. It is distinguished from a non-native hybrid that occasionally escapes from plantings (*Agastache foeniculum* x *A. rugosa*) by the green underside of its leaves, a smooth calyx, and middle leaves with long petioles.

**POPULATION STATUS IN MASSACHUSETTS:** Purple Giant Hyssop is listed under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act as Endangered. 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. Purple Giant Hyssop is currently known from Hampshire County, and it occurred historically in Berkshire and Suffolk counties.

**RANGE:** Purple Giant Hyssop is found from New Hampshire west to South Dakota, and throughout much of the Midwest and the Mid-Atlantic region south to North Carolina. It is critically imperiled in several states and may have been extirpated from Kansas, Kentucky, and Georgia.

**HABITAT:** Purple Giant Hyssop is currently known from only one location in Massachusetts, in rich mesic woods in Hampshire County. Associated species include Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*), Basswood (*Tilia americana*), White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*), Goldie's Wood-fern (*Dryopteris goldiana*), Zigzag Goldenrod (*Solidago flexicaulis*), and White Baneberry (*Actaea pachypoda*). Habitat requirements have not been well-described, but the species is thought to require moderate sunlight and some disturbance to expose mineral soil for successful seed establishment. Purple Giant Hyssop may also occur in rich soil, along river banks, and in roadside thickets.

## **THREATS AND MANAGEMENT**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Purple Giant Hyssop may be threatened by deer browse, dense shade, or lack of disturbances that create a mineral-soil seed bed. Fencing to prevent deer browse with management to increase light and scarify soils may be useful. Caution is needed to prevent invasive species establishment, which may threaten Purple Giant Hyssop. 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.

## **REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

- Corrigan, E. E. 2002. *Agastache scrophulariifolia* (Willd.) Kuntze (purple giant hyssop) Conservation and Research Plan for New England. New England Wild Flower Society, Framingham, MA.
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<http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>.
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Updated 2019

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