



## Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

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Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

## Swamp Smartweed *Persicaria setacea* (Baldwin) Small

State Status: **Threatened**

Federal Status: **None**

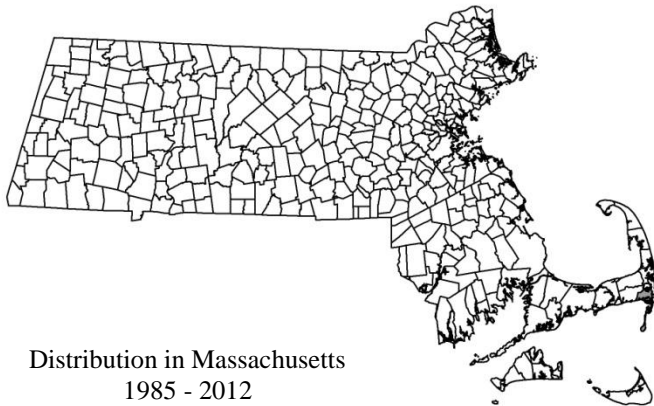
**DESCRIPTION:** Swamp Smartweed is a robust, semi-aquatic, perennial species in the Knotweed family (Polygonaceae) with unbranched or sparingly branched stems. It grows erect to 0.4 to 1.5 m tall, with greenish-white or green flower clusters. The common name refers to the many fine whitish hairs that are appressed to the stem (“strigose”) and cover the leaves. This species spreads vegetatively via elongate horizontal rhizomes.

**AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION:** A technical manual should be used to identify Swamp Smartweed and other *Persicaria* species. In Swamp Smartweed, the cylindrical ocrea (sheath at the stem formed from the stipules) is thickly covered in hairs and fringed with long, stout bristles. The leaves are lanceolate to oblong-lanceolate and pointed at both ends, with short petioles. The flower clusters are raceme-like and terminal.



*Swamp Smartweed has terminal flower clusters of green-white flowers, with fine whitish hairs appressed to the stem and leaves.*

*Photo by Robert H. Mohlenbrock @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / USDA SCS. 1989. Midwest wetland flora: Field office illustrated guide to plant species. Midwest National Technical Center, Lincoln.*



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

**SIMILAR SPECIES:** *Persicaria setacea* can be difficult to distinguish from *P. hydropiperoides*, but it is usually larger and more upright. The flowers of *P. setacea* are greenish-white, while those of *P. hydropiperoides* typically have a pinkish hue. The two species can be distinguished more definitively by careful examination of the hairs on the upper leaf-surface and ocreae. In *P. setacea*, the hairs are fused to the ocreae for up to one-third their length. In *P. hydropiperoides*, the hairs are fused for one-third to two-thirds their length. The hairs of *P. setacea* are conspicuously enlarged at the base, while in *P. hydropiperoides* the hairs are gradually enlarged to the base.

**POPULATION STATUS IN MASSACHUSETTS:** Swamp Smartweed is listed under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act as Threatened. All listed species are protected from killing, collecting, possessing, or sale, and from activities that would destroy habitat and thus

**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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directly or indirectly cause mortality or disrupt critical behaviors. Swamp Smartweed is currently known from Barnstable County, and was found historically in Hampden, Plymouth, and Nantucket Counties.

**RANGE:** Swamp Smartweed occurs across the eastern United States south to Florida, and west to Michigan, Oklahoma and Texas. It is also found in Washington. It is rare in Massachusetts, New York, Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, and considered to be historic in Rhode Island. This species also occurs in Canada from Quebec to British Columbia, and south into South America.

**HABITAT:** In New England, Swamp Smartweed is found on sandy to peaty pond shores, in moist thickets, and in shallow emergent marshes. Periodic flooding or high water, and saturated or moist soils, are crucial for this semi-aquatic species. It is generally found in acidic but somewhat fertile soils.

**THREATS AND MANAGEMENT**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Alteration of hydrological conditions and changes in nutrient inputs and water quality should be avoided at sites supporting Swamp Smartweed. This species may be threatened by establishment of dense woody vegetation; extant populations should be monitored for both native and non-native competitors. If needed, a plan should be developed, in consultation with the Massachusetts Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, to reduce or eliminate competing species. In addition, disturbance to pond shores should be avoided to prevent conditions that encourage establishment of non-native species. All active management of state-listed 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 & Endangered Species Program.

**Flowering in Massachusetts**

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

**Fruiting in Massachusetts**

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

**REFERENCES:**

Gleason, H. A., and A. Cronquist. 1991. *Manual of Vascular Plants of Northeastern United States and Adjacent Canada*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. The New York Botanical Garden, Bronx, NY.

Haines, A. 2011. *Flora Novae Angliae – a Manual for the Identification of Native and Naturalized Higher Vascular Plants of New England*. New England Wildflower Society, Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, CT.

USDA SCS. 1989. *Midwest Wetland Flora: Field Office Illustrated Guide to Plant Species*. Midwest National Technical Center, Lincoln, NE.

Updated 2019

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