



Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

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Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

Wild Pink *Silene caroliniana* Walt. ssp. *pensylvanica* (Michx.) Clausen

State Status: **None**
Federal Status: **none**

DESCRIPTION: Wild Pink is a colorful, late-spring, perennial wildflower that grows at the edge of woods, along paths, and in areas not in deep shade. It is best found at the end of May or very early June when the bright pink (sometimes white) flowers are in full display. The flowering period lasts about 12 days. The plant grows in a clump and is about 20 cm (8 inches) in height. There are many leaves at the base of the plant and a pair of opposite, sessile leaves along the stem. The leaves are entire (no teeth along the margins), and the basal leaves are oblanceolate (the end of the leaf is wider than the base). The leaves are up to 12 cm (almost 5 inches) long and vary from 12 to 30 mm (about a half to one inch) wide, and glabrous (without hairs) on both surfaces, with the margins and veins of the leaf pubescent on the lower surface.

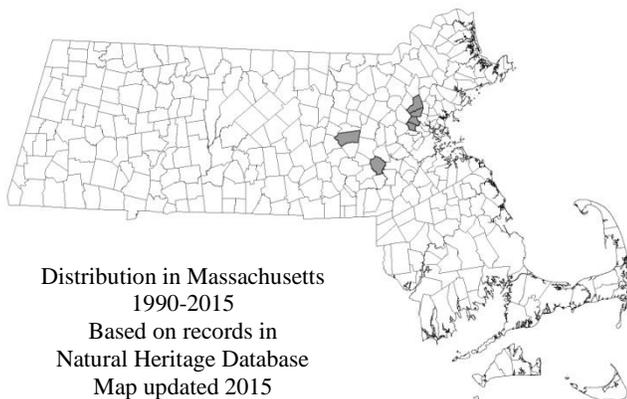
The petals in this family (the pink family, or Caryophyllaceae) are separate. They appear to be fused into a tube, and the five-petal structure makes these look like phlox, but the petals are not joined and can be pulled apart. The outer edge of the petals is not notched. The calyx is a tube of joined sepals which covers the base of



Photo by NHESP Staff

the petals. This calyx tube is up to 20 mm (3/4 inch) long and is glandular-pubescent. There are ten stamens within the flower. The pollinated flowers ripen into a capsule that is 1 cm in length (1/2 inch) that will split open at the top and release the seeds, which are about 1.5 mm in diameter.

AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION: Wild Pink looks similar to a few species of campion, which are in the same genus. However, campions mostly have notched petals. It also may resemble species of phlox, but those have joined petals that form a corolla tube, whereas Wild Pink has separate petals. Finally, the similar species are mostly introduced and occur in more weedy, disturbed sites.



Distribution in Massachusetts
1990-2015
Based on records in
Natural Heritage Database
Map updated 2015

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

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

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HABITAT: Wild Pink is found in rocky woods, sometimes in oak/hickory woods, scrub oak/pitch pine woods, along roadsides, railroad tracks, clearings, and trails. Some associates include *Quercus rubra* (Northern Red Oak), *Quercus velutina* (Black Oak), *Quercus alba* (White Oak), *Quercus ilicifolia* (Scrub Oak), *Quercus prinoides* (Dwarf Chestnut Oak), *Vaccinium angustifolium* (Low Sweet Blueberry), *Vaccinium pallidum* (Early Sweet Blueberry), *Carex pensylvanica* (Pennsylvania Sedge), *Lespedeza capitata* (Round-headed Bush Clover), *Potentilla canadensis* (Dwarf Cinquefoil), *Schizachyrium scoparium* (Little Bluestem), *Comandra umbellata* (False Toadflax), *Aureolaria flava* (Smooth False Foxglove), *Nuttallanthus canadensis* (Oldfield Toadflax), *Krigia virginica* (Dwarf Dandelion), *Viola pedata* (Bird's Foot Violet), *Ionactis linariifolia* (Flax-leaved Aster), *Achillea millefolium* (Yarrow), and *Rubus flagellaris* (Dewberry).

POPULATION STATUS IN MASSACHUSETTS:

Wild Pink has been collected from Berkshire, Hampshire, Worcester, Middlesex, Suffolk, Norfolk, and Bristol counties. Most of the recent records in our database are from Middlesex County. Many of the records are older than 1980.

RANGE: This subspecies of Wild Pink (*Silene caroliniana* ssp. *pensylvanica*) is ranked state Historic and Endangered in New Hampshire, where it is at the northern edge of its range. It ranges west through New York, where it is ranked as vulnerable, and south to Ohio and Tennessee, where it is ranked state Threatened in both states. It is also found in North Carolina, and north along the coast.

THREATS: More research and more recent locations are needed to understand the threats to this rare species. However, it appears clear from the current evidence that forest succession, the closure of the canopy of forests, is the primary threat to this species.

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS: Careful and thorough botanical inventory work will help with management decisions, and should be a part of follow-up to management work. This is a species that is likely favored by management that reverses the effects of forest succession: e.g., canopy clearing and prescribed fire.

REFERENCES:

- Fernald, M.L. 1950. *Gray's Manual of Botany, A Handbook of the Flowering Plants and Ferns of the Central and Northeastern United States and Adjacent Canada*. Eighth (Centennial). D. Van Nostrand Co.
- Gleason, H.A., and A. Cronquist. 1991. *Manual of Vascular Plants of Northeastern United States and Adjacent Canada*. Second edition. Bronx, NY: New York Botanical Garden.
- Haines, A. 2011. *New England Wild Flower Society's Flora Novae Angliae: A Manual for the Identification of Native and Naturalized Higher Vascular Plants of New England*. Yale University Press.

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

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