



## Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

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

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

## Snowberry *Symphoricarpos albus* var. *albus* (L.) S.F. Blake

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

**DESCRIPTION:** Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus* var. *albus*) is a low thicket forming shrub of the honeysuckle family (Caprifoliaceae). It is found in sunny, dry, rocky habitats on limestone and sandstone. This species gets its name from its white berrylike fruits.

**AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION:** Snowberry has opposite, oval to nearly round, entire (untoothed) but occasionally lobed leaves, which are 1 to 5 cm (0.4–2 in) long and 1 to 3 cm (0.4–1.2 in) wide. They are usually hairy on the undersides. The 5 to 8 mm (0.2–0.3 in) flowers are pink and bell-shaped, with five lobes emanating from a slightly lopsided tube, and are borne in small terminal clusters. The white fruits measure 6 to 10 mm, each containing a pair of oval, 4 to 5 mm long nutlets. Young twigs may be smooth or finely hairy and are light brown, turning purplish to gray as they mature. The bark becomes shredded with age, and the whole plant may be up to 1 m (3.3 ft) high.

**SIMILAR SPECIES:** The ornamental Western Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus* var. *laevigatus*), native to western North America, is occasionally found escaped to roadsides. Its twigs and leaves are smooth,

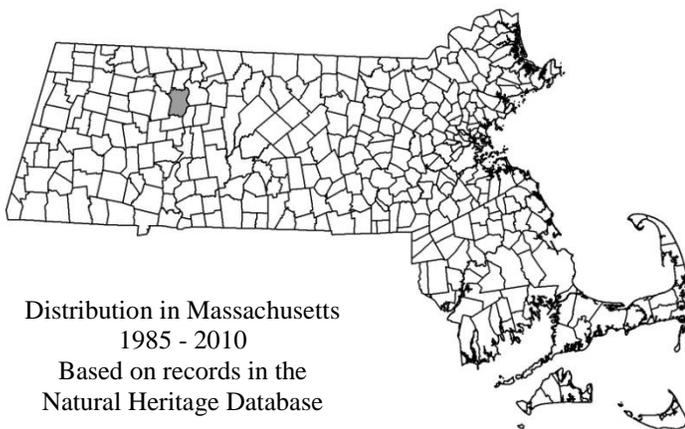


Snowberry, with the distinctive white berry. Photo: Charles Eiseman.

not hairy, and it can be up to 2 m (6.6 ft) high. The flowers are typically in elongate terminal racemes, and the fruits are larger at 10 to 15 mm (0.4–0.6 in.) in diameter.

Snowberry might also be confused with various honeysuckles (*Lonicera* spp.). Morrow's Honeysuckle (*L. morrowii*) an invasive species from Asia now commonly occurs in many habitats in Massachusetts. It is typically well over 1 m (3.3 ft) high and has creamy white to yellow flowers with curled-back petals. Honeysuckles in general differ from snowberries in having flowers over 1 cm that are often two-lipped, and with several-seeded fruits that may be various colors but never white.

**HABITAT IN MASSACHUSETTS:** The single known population of Snowberry in Massachusetts is on a dry, open, grassy, very steep slope of loose, somewhat calcareous sandstone. The species has also been reported as growing “in a groove on a low limestone hill.”



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

*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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**PHENOLOGY:** Flowers bloom in June. Immature fruits are present by the end of June and ripe fruit often remain attached through the winter.

**RANGE:** Snowberry is at its eastern range limit in western Massachusetts. It occurs from Quebec to western Virginia, west to British Columbia and Colorado.

**POPULATION STATUS IN MASSACHUSETTS:** Snowberry 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. The single known current population is in Franklin County, and there is one historic record from Berkshire County.

**THREATS AND MANAGEMENT**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Erosion and shading have been noted as potential threats at the site where Snowberry is currently found. Selective removal of trees may be considered if shading becomes an issue. 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 & Endangered Species Program.

**Flowers Present in Massachusetts**

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

**Fruit Present in Massachusetts**

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

**REFERENCES:**

Hoffmann, R. 1904. Notes on the rare flora of Berkshire County. *Rhodora* 6: 206.  
 Sorrie, B.A. 1987. Notes on the rare flora of Massachusetts. *Rhodora* 89: 113-196.

Updated 2015

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