

Manitoba's Species At Risk

Threatened



Any native Manitoba species likely to become endangered or at risk due to low or declining numbers in Manitoba if the factors affecting it don't improve. Threatened species are declared as such by regulation under the *Endangered Species Act*

Culver's-root

Veronicastrum virginicum

Culver's-root is a provincially threatened plant found in Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia and in 36 American states. It is a herbaceous perennial, that can grow to a height of two metres (6.5 feet). The leaves of Culver's-root are widely spaced along the stem in whorls of two to seven. They are narrow with sharply toothed edges and can grow up to 15 centimetres (6 inches) long. The flowers are crowded on long, slender spikes that may reach 20 centimetres (8 inches) in length. Each white to pinkish tubular flower is less than 1 centimetre (0.35 inches) long and has two protruding stamens. Culver's-root often develops several flowering branches giving it a candelabra-like appearance.

Habitat

In Manitoba, Culver's-root typically grows at edges of shrubs and aspen or oak woods. It is found in partially shaded, small, wooded areas as well as in small tallgrass prairie openings. Culver's-root prefers moist, calcium-rich, sandy loam soil. Many of Manitoba's remaining populations are found along roads and fence lines in areas dominated by intensive agriculture.

Life History

Culver's-root lives for several years with new shoots arising from modified stems that overwinter underground. Flowers appear from July to the end of August and are believed to be pollinated by several bee species. Fruits are small capsules containing tiny seeds spread by wind. Culver's-root also reproduces by sending up shoots from along underground stems.

Distribution

The native range of Culver's-root extends from southeastern Manitoba and southwestern Ontario to Maine, south to Florida and Texas. It reaches the northwestern edge of its range in Manitoba, where it is only known to occur within a 450 square kilometre area (173 square miles). This area includes the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve near the Manitoba-Minnesota border and several sites westward to the Green Ridge area.

Status

The Manitoba Conservation Data Centre considers Culver's-root to be very rare in Manitoba (S1). It is rare in Ontario (S2), but is an introduced species in Nova Scotia. NatureServe has assigned a global rank of G4 (apparently secure), as populations are declining in some parts of its range. In Manitoba, much of Culver's-root habitat has been lost or fragmented by conversion to agriculture. Current threats include road allowance maintenance such as mowing and herbicide spraying, grazing by deer and picking or digging.

Culver's-root was listed as threatened in 2001 by regulation under Manitoba's *Endangered Species Act*.

Stewardship and recovery

A key component of stewardship and recovery is the protection of habitat for the species. The Manitoba Tall Grass Prairie Preserve protects over 2,100 hectares (5,200 acres) of prairie, wetland and forest habitat for native plant and animal species, including Culver's-root. Since several populations occur along roads, adjacent landowners and those responsible for road maintenance can help ensure this plants' survival by becoming aware of land



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Cool Facts

Although it can be toxic, Culver's-root has been used by aboriginal people and herbalists for a variety of medicinal purposes.

Veronicastrum virginicum is the only species of the genus *Veronicastrum* that occurs in North America. It is not likely to be confused with any other native plant in Manitoba.

Although *Veronicastrum virginicum* is the scientific name currently accepted by most botanists, some have used the names *Leptandra virginica* and *Veronica virginica* to describe this species.

Culver's-root is widely cultivated as an ornamental garden plant. Several cultivars have been bred for showy flower colours.



management activities that threaten or protect Culver's-root. For example, mowing in late summer may threaten Culver's-root populations by removing flowers before seeds are produced and dispersed. Maintaining native hedgerows or shelterbelts may help promote the survival of Culver's-root populations in Manitoba.

Get involved in recovery

The Manitoba Conservation Data Centre monitors Culver's-root populations regularly. Although it is only found within a very small area of Manitoba, new populations are being discovered. Please contact the Wildlife and Ecosystem Protection Branch, or your nearest Manitoba Conservation office, if you find Culver's-root or would like more information on what you can do to further enhance your land for this and other native Manitoba plant and animal species.

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204-945-7775
www.manitoba.ca/conservation/wildlife/index.html

Manitoba Conservation Regional Office

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204-948-3262

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Lac du Bonnet, Manitoba
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Partners in production of this fact sheet:
Manitoba Conservation,
Wildlife and Ecosystem Protection Branch
Environment Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service
Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation

Extirpated Species

Any species once native to Manitoba that has disappeared through all of its Manitoba range. Extirpated species are declared as such by regulation under the *Endangered Species Act*.

Endangered Species

Any native Manitoba species threatened to disappear through all or most of its Manitoba range. Endangered species are declared as such by regulation under the *Endangered Species Act*.

Threatened Species

Any native Manitoba species likely to become endangered or at risk due to low or declining numbers in Manitoba if the factors affecting it don't improve. Threatened species are declared as such by regulation under the *Endangered Species Act*.

Vulnerable Species

Species not regulated under the *Endangered Species Act* but which could eventually be considered Endangered or Threatened if the factors affecting them do not improve.