



**Natural Heritage
& Endangered Species
Program**

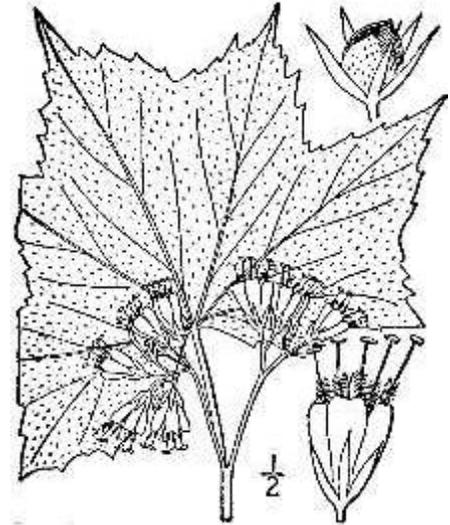
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Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

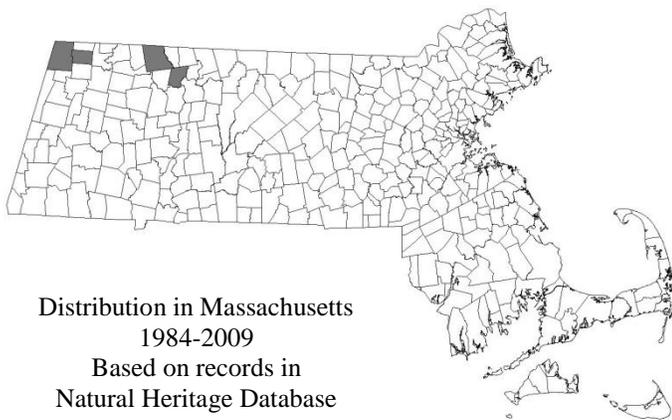
Broad Waterleaf
Hydrophyllum canadense
L.

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

DESCRIPTION: Broad Waterleaf is an herbaceous perennial in the Waterleaf family (Hydrophyllaceae) that grows from long, fleshy rhizomes (horizontal, underground stems). Its slender stem grows 3-5 dm (0.75-1.75 ft.) tall. The genus name *Hydrophyllum* comes from the light green markings on the leaves, which resemble water stains on paper. Broad Waterleaf's alternate, palmately lobed, stem-borne leaves are roundish in general outline, have five to nine lobes, and are unequally toothed. Generally, these leaves are from 1 to 2 dm (3-9 in.) wide; because of their resemblance to maple leaves, the plant is also known as the Maple-leaved Waterleaf. Broad Waterleaf's whitish to pinkish-purple, bell-shaped flowers are pentamerous: there are five united petals, five protruding stamens and a calyx (or outer-most floral whorl) of five parts. Each flower is borne on a very short stalk and is part of a cluster called a cyme. Flowering season is from mid-June through early July.



USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. *An illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions*. 3 vols. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. Vol. 3: 66.



Distribution in Massachusetts
1984-2009
Based on records in
Natural Heritage Database

RANGE: Broad Waterleaf's documented range extends from southern Vermont and western Massachusetts to Maryland, south in the mountains to Georgia and Alabama, and west to Wisconsin, Illinois, Missouri, and northern Arkansas.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Virginia Waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum virginianum*) has flowers similar to those of Broad Waterleaf. Nevertheless, the leaves of Virginia Waterleaf are deeply and pinnately divided, while, in contrast, those of Broad Waterleaf are rather shallowly palmately lobed.

HABITAT IN MASSACHUSETTS: In general, Broad Waterleaf is a plant of rich, moist, limy woods. Broad Waterleaf's current habitats in Massachusetts include Rich, Mesic Forests, a High-terrace Floodplain Forest,

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

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

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and steep banks of a mountain brook, under a canopy of Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*), White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*), and Bitternut Hickory (*Carya cordiformis*). Associated understory plants include species of shield-ferns (*Dryopteris* spp.), Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*), and Blue Cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*).

POPULATION STATUS: Broad Waterleaf 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. Massachusetts has three historical stations (unverified since 1984) and 5 current stations (discovered or relocated since 1984). Given the relatively large amount of apparently suitable habitat in the Commonwealth, it is puzzling that more colonies have not been found; however, the plant is generally very rare in New England. Broad Waterleaf is also considered rare in New Jersey, South Carolina, and Georgia.

Updated 2015

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