



Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

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Round-fruited False-loosestrife

Ludwigia sphaerocarpa Ell.

State Status: **Endangered**

Federal Status: **None**

Description: Round-fruited False-loosestrife is an erect, branching, finely pubescent, shrub-like perennial that stands .03-1 m (1-3 ft.) tall. Leaves are alternate, lanceolate, and narrowed at both ends. Flowers are produced singly at the leaf bases, and are greenish and inconspicuous, but the triangular sepals are readily apparent. The dry fruits are rounded, softly hairy capsules. When submerged or standing in water, the stem bases become spongy and thickened. Except for the semi-woody base, the plant dies back each winter. Flowering occurs from July to September.

Similar Species: The False-loosestrife genus is represented by several local species that inhabit wet places. All are similarly erect and branched except for Water-purslane (*Ludwigia palustris*), a very common species, easily identified by oval leaves and prostrate stems. Seedbox (*L. alternifolia*) has conspicuous yellow petals and square capsules, while *L. sphaerocarpa* has no petals. Many-fruited False-loosestrife (*L. polycarpa*), (Endangered), is very similar but has smooth capsules and inhabits floodplain swamps along the Connecticut River.

Range: Round-fruited False-loosestrife is an Atlantic coastal plain species locally distributed from Massachusetts south to central Florida and Texas with disjunct populations in northwest Indiana and southwest Michigan. Massachusetts marks the northeastern limit of its range. It is listed as rare in Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Virginia, Tennessee, Indiana, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Michigan, and as extirpated in Pennsylvania.



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. 2: 586.

Habitat in Massachusetts: This plant is found on nutrient-rich, muddy, sandy to peaty shores and in shallow water of freshwater ponds and slow-moving rivers with fluctuating water levels. The habitat requirements are not well-known or well-documented in this state for this easily overlooked species. Its associates include Plymouth Gentian (*Sabatia kennedyana*), Common Threesquare (*Schoenoplectus*, formerly *Scirpus, pungens*), Golden Pert (*Gratiola aurea*), Marsh Rush (*Juncus canadensis*), and Bayonet Rush (*Juncus militaris*).

Population Status: Round-fruited False-loosestrife 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.. It is known from only three current stations (since 1986) and four historical (before 1986) stations have not been relocated. One current population is very large and on state land. This species has not been relocated at several historical sites on the Concord River, but further searches of suitable habitat could locate more populations. Potential threats to Round-fruited False-loosestrife are increased recreational use of the shorelines, residential building, and manipulation of water levels for water supplies.



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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