



Maine Department of Conservation  
Natural Areas Program

---

*Cynoglossum virginianum* L.

Northern Wild Comfrey

---

- Habitat:** Rich, upland woods. [Forested wetland;  
Hardwood to mixed forest (forest, upland)]
- Range:** Newfoundland, south to Connecticut, west  
to Iowa and north to British Columbia.
- Phenology:** Flowers April - May.
- Family:** Boraginaceae

**Aids to Identification:** Wild comfrey is a perennial herb with a hairy stem and large (10-30 cm), clasping leaves. The small blue flowers are arranged in 2-6 coiled racemes. Fruits are spine-covered nutlets about 8 mm long.

**Ecological characteristics:** Historical specimens indicate that this species has been found in both northern and southern Maine.

**Synonyms:** Represented in Maine by the variety *boreale* (Fern.) Cooperrider; and formerly known as *Cynoglossum boreale* Fern.

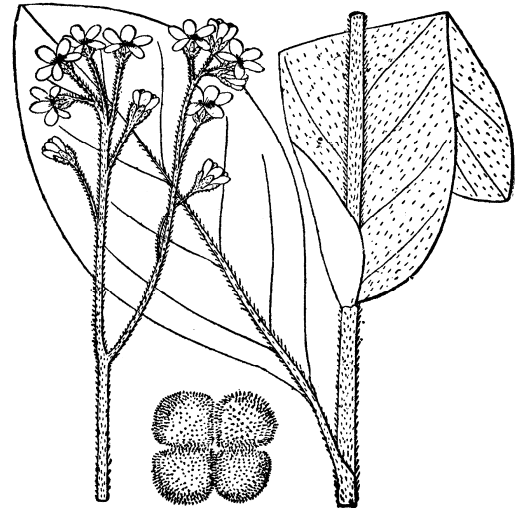


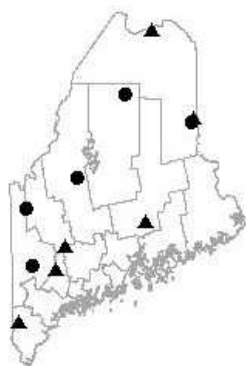
Illustration from Britton & Brown's Illustrated Flora of the Northern United States and Canada, 2nd ed.

**Rarity of *Cynoglossum virginianum***

<b>State Rank:</b>	S1	Critically imperiled in Maine because of extreme rarity or vulnerability to extirpation.
<b>New England Rank:</b>	Division 1	Globally rare plant occurring in New England: Only a few occurrences exist within New England.
<b>Global Rank:</b>	G5T4T5	Species demonstrably widespread, abundant, and secure globally. Subspecies widespread, abundant, and apparently secure, but with possible cause for long-term concern.

**Status of *Cynoglossum virginianum***

<b>Federal Status:</b>	None	No Federal Status.
<b>State Status:</b>	Endangered	Rare and in danger of being lost from the state in the foreseeable future; or federally listed as Endangered. Listing criteria met:



▲ Historical (before 1982)  
● Recent (1982 - present)

### Known Distribution in Maine:

This rare plant has been documented from a total of 11 town(s) in the following county(ies): Androscoggin, Aroostook, Franklin, Oxford, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Somerset, York.

**Dates of documented observations are:** 1898, 1899, 1902, 1904, 1915, 1931, 1987, 1988, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002

### Reason(s) for rarity:

At northern limit of range. Rare throughout New England.

### Conservation considerations:

Effects of logging are not well understood, but partial removal of the canopy would be less likely to adversely affect the plant than complete removal. The plant has been known to disappear from an area following logging.

---

Plant rarity and status is based on 2008 data and the rest of the information in this fact sheet was downloaded from the Natural Areas Program's Biological and Conservation Database on 12 MAY 2004. We are grateful to our Botanical Advisory Group for additional information on particular species, and in particular, to Arthur Haines for his assistance with identifying characteristics and taxonomic questions. Nomenclature follows Haines and Vining's *Flora of Maine* (V.F. Thomas Press, 1998); where older works refer to a plant by another name, it is given under "Synonyms". The Natural Areas Program, within the Department of Conservation, maintains the most comprehensive source of information on Maine's rare or endangered plants and rare or exemplary natural communities, and is a member of the Association for Biodiversity Information.

If you know of locations for this plant or would like more information on this species,  
please contact the Natural Areas Program  
State House Station 93, Augusta, Maine 04333; telephone (207) 287-8044.

