



Rare Plants of New Hampshire

Northern Waterleaf, Eastern or Virginia Waterleaf, John's Cabbage

Hydrophyllum virginianum L.
Waterleaf family (Hydrophyllaceae)

What Does It Look Like?

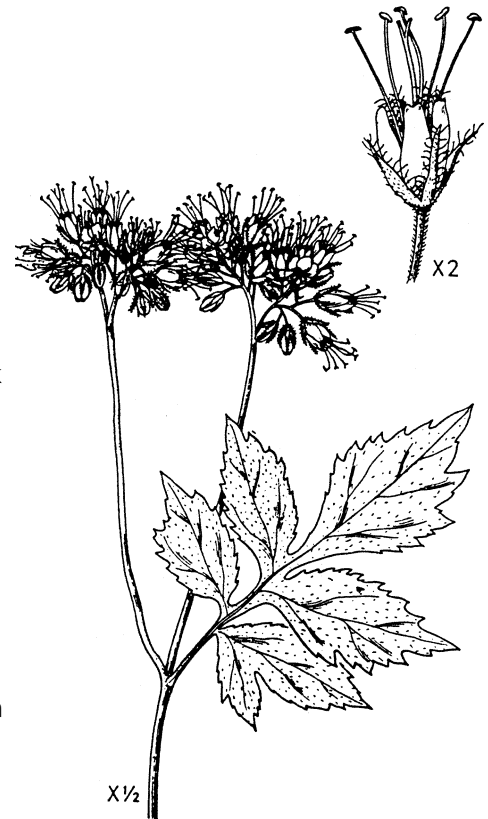
This woodland plant is a perennial, somewhat weak-stemmed herb with hairy upper parts, growing up to 80 cm.

Leaves: The leaves are a dark green, 10-20 cm (4-8 inches) long, with light spots or blotches that look like water spots, hence the common name. They are pinnately divided; the 5-7 toothed leaflets are sharply pointed.

Flower: Lavender to pale bluish-white flowers at the end of stalks that extend far above the leaves. The pistil and stamens are quite conspicuous and extend far beyond the petals, which are united at the base. The sepals are covered with hairs that appear pressed against the surface. It flowers from late May-mid July.

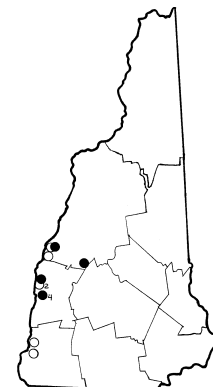
Fruit: Capsules spherical, with 2 openings; 1-3 seeded.

Similar species: Broad-leaved waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum canadense*) has leaves that are palmately lobed and not compound.



Where Is It Found?

Habitat: Across its range, northern waterleaf grows in rich woods, damp clearings, moist or wet woods, and open wet places. In New Hampshire, it is found in rich mesic forests and enriched river terrace slope forests.



**Northern Waterleaf
in New Hampshire**

○ Historic Locations
● Verified since 1980



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Associated species:

Sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), white ash (*Fraxinus americana*), American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), yellow birch (*Betula alleghaniensis*), shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*), flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*), maidenhair fern (*Adiantum pedatum*), wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*), early meadow rue (*Thalictrum dioicum*), squirrel corn (*Dicentra canadensis*), bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), showy orchis (*Galearis spectabilis*).

Distribution: Quebec and western New England south to North Carolina and west to the Mississippi River.

What Is Its Status?

Conservation

status: Populations of northern waterleaf are more secure farther south, but are imperiled in New Hampshire where it is at the northern edge of its range. It is state listed as threatened due to its rarity (only 7 of 13 known occurrences for the state have been confirmed since 1980).

Management: As a plant that is adapted to forest ecosystems, northern waterleaf may not respond well to significant canopy removals. Large canopy removals may be detrimental by favoring species better adapted to more open and drier conditions. If harvesting is necessary, single tree selection is likely to have less impact than clear cutting.

What Should You Do If You Find This Plant?

Please report sightings of this or other rare species to the New Hampshire Natural Heritage Inventory. Documentation should include: (1) location of the sighting on USGS topographic map or road map, with written directions for relocating the plant; (2) a photo of the plant; and (3) descriptive information including how many plants there are, whether any plants are flowering or fruiting, and comments about the surrounding vegetation. Information may be sent to NHHI/DRED, PO Box 1856, Concord, NH 03302-1856. If you have any questions, please call the New Hampshire Natural Heritage Inventory Program at (603) 271-3623.

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