



Rare Plants of New Hampshire

Early Buttercup, Thick-Rooted Buttercup

Ranunculus fascicularis

Buttercup family (Ranunculaceae)

What Does It Look Like?

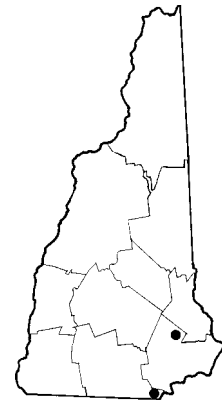
This woodland plant is a small, weak-stemmed but erect or ascending perennial, usually less than 30 cm (12 inches) tall. The stem is slightly hairy and it grows from tuberous roots.

- Leaves:** Mostly basal, egg-shaped in outline and long stalked. All leaves are deeply lobed with coarsely toothed, blunt segments. Stem leaves, if present, are smaller and nearly stalkless.
- Flower:** Single flowers appear at the end of long stalks. The petals are pale yellow, elliptic to oblong and longer than wide. There are 5 sepals and the stamens are numerous. It flowers from mid April to May.
- Fruit:** A cluster of fruits, each flattened, rotund, and sharply margined with a slender, straight beak.
- Similar species:** This plant looks similar to other yellow buttercups. It can be separated from them by a combination of these characteristics: 5 sepals; both basal and stem leaves deeply lobed and mostly longer than wide; petals about twice as long as they are wide; and smooth, flattened, sharply margined fruits.



Where Is It Found?

- Habitat:** Across its range, early buttercup grows in thin soil in open or dry woods. In New Hampshire, it is most likely to be found in oak or oak-hickory forests and woodlands (often enriched), along rocky ridges, outcrops, or thin till soils in the southern parts of the state.



Early Buttercup in New Hampshire

- Historic Locations
● Verified since 1980



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Associated species:

Red oak (*Quercus rubra*), white pine (*Pinus strobus*), hickories (*Carya* spp.), eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), bush honeysuckle (*Diervilla lonicera*), early low blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*), common hair grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*), ebony spleenwort (*Asplenium platyneuron*), rusty woodsia (*Woodsia ilvensis*), Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*), little bluestem (*Schizacharium scoparium*), hay-scented fern (*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*)

Distribution: New Hampshire to Maryland and southwest to Texas.

What Is Its Status?

Conservation

status:

Populations of early buttercup are more secure farther south, but it is critically imperiled in New Hampshire where it is at the northern edge of its range. Because of its extreme rarity here (only two occurrences have been recorded for the state, both of them since 1980) it is state listed as endangered.

Management:

As a plant adapted to forest or partially forested ecosystems, it is uncertain how it would respond to significant canopy removals. Canopy removals generally increase light, temperature, and nutrient availability and decrease moisture levels, conditions which generally favor more competitive species. 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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