



# Rare Plants of New Hampshire

## Palmate Violet, Wood Violet

*Viola palmata* L.

Violet family (Violaceae)

### What Does It Look Like?

This woodland plant is a hairy, “stemless” (with only basal leaves) blue violet with ascending leaves.

**Leaves:** More or less hairy, and mostly strongly cut into palmate lobes, though the early leaves may be slightly toothed at the base or heart-shaped.

**Flower:** Deep to pale violet, sometimes streaked with white, 2-3 cm (0.8-1.0 inches) wide, often shorter than the lobed leaves. The three lower petals are usually bearded with short hairs in the throat of the flower. It flowers from early May to mid June.

**Fruit:** An egg-shaped capsule, longer than the sepals, with brown seeds.

**Similar species:** Of the stemless violets, only bird’s foot violet (*Viola pedata*) is similar (also rare in New Hampshire). Bird’s foot violet has smooth deeply divided leaves (not hairy). The flowers have beardless petals and prominent orange stamens, that noticeably protrude from the throat of the flower, and help to separate it from palmate violet. Both are found in very similar habitats.



### Where Is It Found?

**Habitat:** Across its range, palmate violet grows in well drained soil in woods, clearings, and glades. In New Hampshire, it is found in oak-pine, oak, and oak-hickory forests of rocky ridges and slopes, and sandy roadsides or power openings.

**Associated species:** Red oak (*Quercus rubra*), white pine (*Pinus strobus*), eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), scrub oak (*Quercus ilicifolia*), bush honeysuckle (*Diervilla lonicera*), early low blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*), Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*), little bluestem (*Schizacharium scoparius*), hay-scented fern (*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*).



### Palmate Violet in New Hampshire

- Historic Locations
- Verified since 1980



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**Distribution:** Maine to Minnesota, south to Florida and Texas.

### What Is Its Status?

**Conservation**

**status:** Populations of palmate violet are more secure farther south, but it is imperiled in New Hampshire where it is at the northern edge of its range. Because of its extreme rarity here it is state listed as endangered. Its present status in the state is uncertain and possibly imperiled; more information on this species is needed. Two occurrences of palmate violet have been recorded for the state. Neither has been seen since 1973.

**Management:** Palmate violet is reasonably tolerant of open conditions but may be out-competed by woody or other vigorous growth without a natural or artificial disturbance to keep its habitat from closing in too much. Late season mowing of artificial habitats (eg. roadsides) may be beneficial. Little information is available regarding management needs or its response in natural settings, although some habitats are fire prone.

### 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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