

Saxifraga hyperborea R. Br.

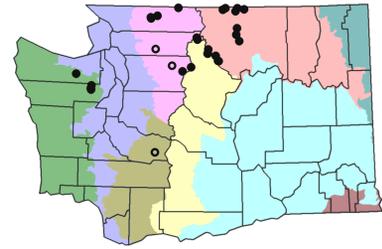
synonym: *Saxifraga debilis* Engelm. ex A. Gray, *Saxifraga rivularis* L. (misapplied)

pygmy saxifrage

Saxifragaceae - saxifrage family

status: State Sensitive

rank: G5 / S3



General Description: Solitary or tufted perennial, usually reddish purple (sometimes green), hairless or sparsely hairy, lacking stolons and rhizomes. Leaves mostly basal; petioles (2) 5-35 mm. Basal leaf blades kidney-shaped to orbiculate, (2) 3-6 (10) mm broad, with (2) 3-5 (7) shallow, rounded lobes; margins smooth to sparsely stalked-glandular, surfaces hairless to sparsely glandular. Stems with 1-3 leaves, reduced, dissimilar from basal leaves.

Floral Characteristics: Flowering stems 1-5 cm tall. Flowers (1) 2-5. Hypanthium U-shaped in long section, sparsely to densely long stalked-glandular. Sepals erect, sometimes purple, ovate to lance-oblong, surfaces somewhat stipitate-glandular. Petals purple or white, faded when dried, oblong, (1.5) 2-3.4 (5) mm, equaling or up to 1.5 times the length of the sepals. Ovary 1/2 inferior. Flowers July to August.

Fruits: Capsules 4-6 mm long; seeds many, brown, minutely wrinkled, 0.5 mm long.

Identification Tips: Distinguished by its small kidney-shaped leaves with usually 3-5 shallow lobes, lack of rhizomes and stolons, erect sepals, and petals up to about 1.5 times longer than the sepals. *Saxifraga rivularis* and *S. debilis* do not occur in WA. *Saxifraga cernua* is similar, but it has bulblets borne in the axils of the upper stem leaves and in place of some flowers taller flowering stems and ovaries scarcely 1/4 inferior when flowering.

Range: Greenland, most of Canada, AK, south to CA, and east to MT, WY, CO, NM, and AZ.

Habitat/Ecology: Damp, shaded cliffs, rock crevices, and talus in alpine and subalpine areas, commonly as single plants rather than in clusters or populations. Elevations in WA: 1600-2700 m (5200-8800 ft). Associated species include mosses, sedges (*Carex* spp.), rushes (*Juncus* spp.), saxifrage (*Saxifraga* spp.), alpine mountain sorrel (*Oxyria digyna*), alpine buttercup (*Ranunculus eschscholtzii*), and alpine fescue (*Festuca brachyphylla* ssp. *brachyphylla*).

Comments: Mining is the greatest threat to *S. hyperborea*. Grazing also poses a threat, but the species' rocky habitat limits accessibility by grazing animals. This taxon is also rare in WY, NH, Manitoba, Quebec, and Newfoundland.

References: Douglas et al. 1998-2002, vol. 5; Flora of North America 1993+, vol. 8; Klinkenberg 2008.

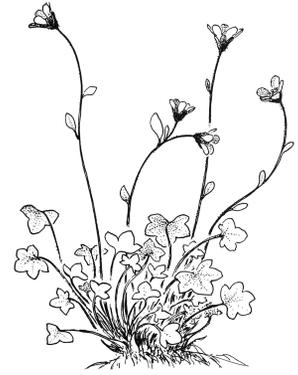


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