

# Creeping St. John's-wort



*Hypericum adpressum* in flower



Photo credits: *Stephen M. Young*

**Scientific Name** *Hypericum adpressum*  
Raf. ex W. Bart.

**Family Name** Clusiaceae  
st. john's-wort family

## Did you know?

This wetland species develops spongy stems and enlarged bases when it grows in water that does not fluctuate. It does not take on this form when it grows in coastal plain ponds where water levels fluctuate from year to year (Enser 2000).

## Summary

**Protection** Threatened in New York State, not listed federally.

This level of state protection means: listed species are those with: 1) 6 to fewer than 20 extant sites, or 2) 1,000 to fewer than 3,000 individuals, or 3) restricted to not less than 4 or more than 7 U.S.G.S. 7 ½ minute topographical maps, or 4) listed as threatened by U.S. Department of Interior.

**Rarity** G3, S2

A global rarity rank of G3 means: This species is either rare and local throughout its range (21 to 100 occurrences), or found locally (even abundantly at some of its locations) in a restricted range (e.g. a single physiographic region), or is vulnerable to extinction throughout its range because of other factors.

A state rarity rank of S2 means: This plant is threatened/imperiled in New York because of rarity (typically 6-20 populations or few remaining individuals) or is vulnerable to extirpation from New York due to biological factors.

## Conservation Status in New York

There are nine existing populations, most of them with hundreds of plants. There are five additional populations known from the early 1900s which have not been rediscovered. Three additional populations are considered extirpated.

## Short-term Trends

Most populations have had one revisit and seem stable although the number of plants detected is somewhat dependent upon the water level of the ponds.

## Long-term Trends

This plant has always been rare in New York and the number of populations are stable. Even though some populations have been eliminated on western Long Island, new populations have been found on eastern Long Island.

# Conservation and Management

## Threats

Some ponds have seen too much development along the shoreline which threaten populations with direct disturbance by trampling and ATV use. The invasion of Phragmites is also a threat to a few populations. This plant occurs in the most susceptible section of the pond margin.

## Conservation Strategies and Management Practices

The pondshores need to be protected from direct disturbance by ATVs and excessive trampling. Exotic invasive species must be prevented from colonizing the shores and present populations must be eliminated. A natural buffer of at least 200 feet should be established around the ponds to prevent excessive runoff and pollution events.

## Habitat

These plants occur in saturated to flooded acidic sands and peat of coastal plain pond shores, swales, and wet meadows of the coastal plain.

## Associated Ecological Communities

### Coastal Plain Pond Shore

The gently sloping shore of a coastal plain pond with seasonally and annually fluctuating water levels. Plants growing on the pond shore vary with water levels. In dry years when water levels are low there is often a dense growth of annual sedges, grasses, and herbs. Submerged and floating-leaved aquatic plants, such as fragrant waterlily and pondweeds, may become "stranded" on the exposed shore. In wet years when the water level is high only a few emergents and floating-leaved aquatics may be noticeable. The vegetation of this pond shore community can change dramatically from one year to the next depending on fluctuations in groundwater levels.

### Shallow Emergent Marsh

A marsh meadow community that occurs on soils that are permanently saturated and seasonally flooded. This marsh is better drained than a deep emergent marsh; water depths may range from 6 in to 3.3 ft (15 cm to 1 m) during flood stages, but the water level usually drops by mid to late summer and the soil is exposed during an average year.

### Undetermined Open Mineral Soil Wetlands

This subsystem includes wetlands with less than 50% canopy cover of trees. There are 11 different community types within this subsystem.

### **Associated Species**

Three-lobed Beggar-ticks (*Bidens tripartita*)  
Blue-joint Reedgrass (*Calamagrostis canadensis*)  
Common Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)  
Coast Pepper-bush (*Clethra alnifolia*)  
Rose Coreopsis (*Coreopsis rosea*)  
Toothed Sedge (*Cyperus dentatus*)  
Hairy Swamp Loosestrife (*Decodon verticillatus*)  
Threeway Sedge (*Dulichium arundinaceum*)  
Horse-tail Spikerush (*Eleocharis equisetoides*)  
Robbins Spikerush (*Eleocharis robbinsii*)  
Flat-top Fragrant Goldenrod (*Euthamia graminifolia*)  
Many-flowered Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle umbellata*)  
Common Rush (*Juncus effusus*)  
Bayonet Rush (*Juncus militaris*)  
Globe-fruited False-loosestrife (*Ludwigia sphaerocarpa*)  
Sessile-leaved Bugleweed (*Lycopus amplexans*)  
Brownish Beakrush (*Rhynchospora capitellata*)  
Tall Beaked-rush (*Rhynchospora macrostachya*)  
Three-square Bulrush (*Schoenoplectus pungens*)  
Smith's Bulrush (*Schoenoplectus smithii*)  
Cottongrass Bulrush (*Scirpus cyperinus*)  
Hardhack Spiraea (*Spiraea tomentosa*)  
Highbush Blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*)

### **Identification Comments**

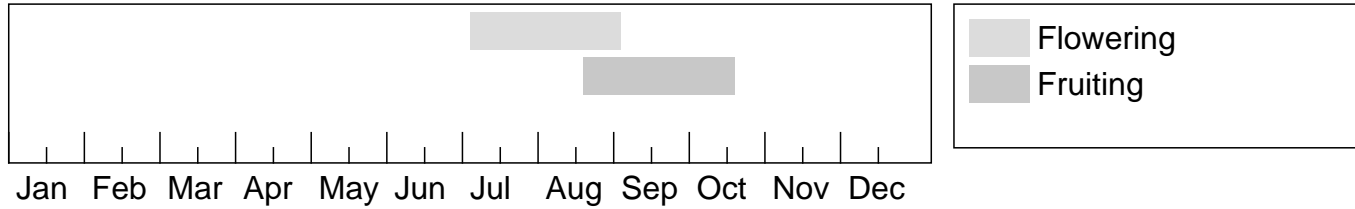
Creeping St. John's wort is a rhizomatous herbaceous plant that grows 3-8 decimeters tall. It usually occurs in large clumps with many stems. It has opposite, linear, to narrowly elliptic leaves that are 3-6 centimeters long and 5-10 millimeters wide, 4-6 times as long as wide. Each leaf has a tiny white point at the tip and is tapered at the sessile base. The margins are without teeth and turned under. There are usually many flowers in the inflorescence. The sepals are lanceolate to ovate and 2-7 millimeters long, widest at or below the middle. The bright yellow petals are 6-8 millimeters long. The fruit is a one-chambered capsule that is 4-6 millimeters long and gradually narrowed to the beak.

### **Best Life Stage for Identifying This Species**

Even though these can be identified by their leaves in their pondshore habitat it is best to identify them in flower or fruit.

### **The Best Time to See**

The plants begin flowering in July and are visible through August. Fruits are visible from late August through early October.



The time of year you would expect to find Creeping St. John's-wort in New York.

### Similar Species

*Hypericum ellipticum* looks the most like this species but its leaves are flat and not turned under on the margin and the tips are not pointed but rounded. They are only 2-3 times as long as wide. The sepals are widest above the middle. They both are plants of wet places, rhizomatous, and with styles that are not separate.

## Taxonomy

Kingdom Plantae

└ Phylum Anthophyta

└ Class Dicots (Dicotyledoneae)

└ Order Theales

└ Family Clusiaceae (st. john's-wort family)

## Additional Resources

### Links

#### USDA Plants Database

<http://plants.usda.gov/java/nameSearch?mode=sciname&keywordquery=HYPERICUM+ADPRESSUM>

#### NatureServe Explorer

<http://natureserve.org/explorer/servlet/NatureServe?searchName=HYPERICUM+ADPRESSUM>

#### Google Images

<http://images.google.com/images?q=HYPERICUM+ADPRESSUM>

### Best Identification Reference

Gleason, Henry A. and A. Cronquist. 1991. *Manual of Vascular Plants of Northeastern United States and Adjacent Canada*. The New York Botanical Garden, Bronx, New York. 910 pp.

### References

Clemants, Steven and Carol Gracie. 2006. *Wildflowers in the Field and Forest. A Field Guide to the Northeastern United States*. Oxford University Press, New York, NY. 445 pp.

Crow, Garrett E. and C. Barre Hellquist. 2000. *Aquatic and Wetland Plants of Northeastern North America: A revised and enlarged edition of Norman C. Fassett's a Manual of Aquatic Plants*.

Volume One: Pteridophytes, Gymnosperms, and Angiosperms: Dicotyledons. The University of Wisconsin Press. Madison, Wisconsin. 536 Pages.

- Enser, Richard W. 2000. *Hypericum adpressum* Barton, Creeping St. John's-wort. New England Plant Conservation Program Conservation and Research Plan. New England Wild Flower Society, Framingham, MA 01701.
- Fernald, M.L. 1950. *Gray's manual of botany*. 8th edition. D. Van Nostrand, New York. 1632 pp.
- Holmgren, Noel. 1998. *The Illustrated Companion to Gleason and Cronquist's Manual. Illustrations of the Vascular Plants of Northeastern United States and Adjacent Canada*. The New York Botanical Garden, Bronx, New York.
- Keys, Jr., J.; Carpenter, C.; Hooks, S.; Koenig, F.; McNab, W.H.; Russell, W.; Smith, M.L. 1995. *Ecological units of the eastern United States - first approximation (cd-rom)*, Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. GIS coverage in ARC/INFO format, selected imagery, and map unit tables.
- NatureServe. 2005. *NatureServe Central Databases*. Arlington, Virginia. USA
- New York Natural Heritage Program. 2010. *Biotics database*. New York Natural Heritage Program. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Albany, NY.
- Weldy, T. and D. Werier. 2010. *New York flora atlas*. [S.M. Landry, K.N. Campbell, and L.D. Mabe (original application development), Florida Center for Community Design and Research <http://www.fccdr.usf.edu/>. University of South Florida <http://www.usf.edu/>]. New York Flora Association <http://www.nyflora.org/>, Albany, New York

---

**New York Natural Heritage Program**

625 Broadway, 5th Floor,  
Albany, NY 12233-4757  
Phone: (518) 402-8935  
[acris@nynhp.org](mailto:acris@nynhp.org)

This project is made possible with funding from:

- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Hudson River Estuary Program
- Division of Lands & Forests, Department of Environmental Conservation
- New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Information for this guide was last updated on Aug 22, 2017

This guide was authored by Stephen M. Young