

***Saxifraga cernua* L.**
nodding saxifrage
Saxifragaceae (Saxifrage Family)

Status: State Sensitive

Rank: G4S1S2

General Description: Glandular and hairy grayish perennial. Each plant has one or two flowering stalks at least 4 in. (10 cm) tall. Reddish-purple rice-like bulblets are present in the leaf axils and replace the lowermost, or sometimes all, of the flowers. The stem leaves are alternate, reduced and few-lobed to entire, while the basal leaves are kidney-shaped with shallow lobes and grow from the base of flower stalks. The stems are densely hairy. The calyx is purplish and the petals are white. The fruit has a persistent calyx that is brown and hairy.

Identification Tips: The presence of bulblets in both the basal and cauline leaf axils helps to differentiate this species from other *Saxifraga*. The ovary is one quarter inferior at flowering, less so at maturity. The use of a hand lens is necessary to positively identify. The name “nodding saxifrage” refers to the flowering stem nodding from the weight of a developing fruit.

Phenology: Flowering occurs July through August.

Range: The species is circumboreal and apparently abundant in the Arctic. *S. cernua* ranges from Alaska to Labrador in Canada, south in the Rockies to New Mexico, and stretches into the northern Cascades. Peripheral in Washington, the species is found in Okanogan County.

Habitat: *Saxifraga cernua* occurs in seepage areas, moist crevices, and along streambanks.

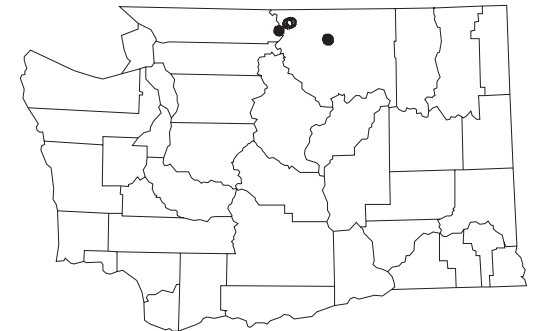
Ecology: *Saxifraga cernua* is found in glacial detritus of the Cascade Mountains of northern Washington. The species is very tolerant to most environmental conditions, occurring in almost all habitats from wet to very dry and sheltered to exposed. It is reported to do especially well in snow patches, as it is highly resistant to frost. The habit of the plant and size of the leaves may indicate favorable or unfavorable environmental conditions. Elevations range from 6000-7200 ft (2000-2400 m).

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nodding saxifrage



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Known distribution of
Saxifraga cernua
in Washington



● Current (1980+)
○ Historic (older than 1980)

Saxifraga cernua
nodding saxifrage



Photo by Robert Moseley

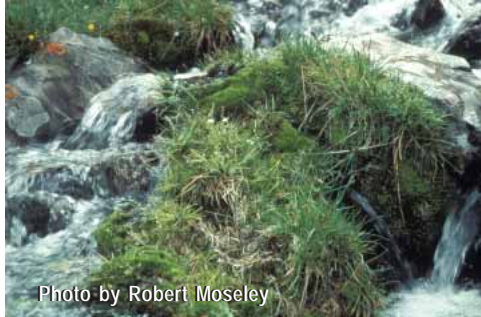


Photo by Robert Moseley

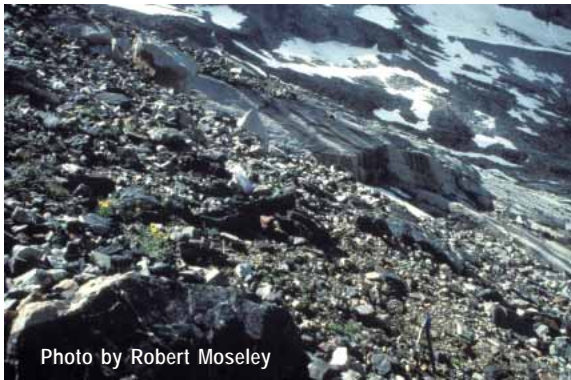


Photo by Robert Moseley

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State Status Comments: *S. cernua* is known from two historical and three recent occurrences within the Okanogan National Forest in Okanogan County.

Inventory Needs: Additional inventory is needed but ranked as a low priority due to the inaccessibility of the habitat.

Threats and Management Concerns: Unknown. Because the species' habitat is inaccessible, threat of destruction is presumed minimal.

References:

Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey and J.W. Thompson. 1961. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Part 3: Saxifragaceae to Ericaceae*. University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA. 614 pp.

McJannet C.L., S.G. Aiken, M.J. Dallwitz, L.J. Gillespie and L.L. Consaul. 1997 onward. Saxifragaceae of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago: Descriptions, Illustrations, Identification, and Information Retrieval. Version: 28th November 2000. <http://www.mun.ca/biology/delta/arctic/>

Washington Natural Heritage Program. 1981. *An Illustrated Guide to the Endangered, Threatened and Sensitive Vascular Plants of Washington*. Washington State Department of Natural Resources. 328 pp.