

# BC's Coast Region: Species & Ecosystems of Conservation Concern

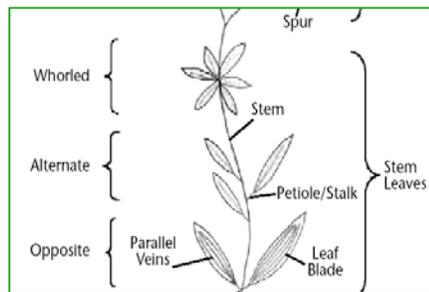
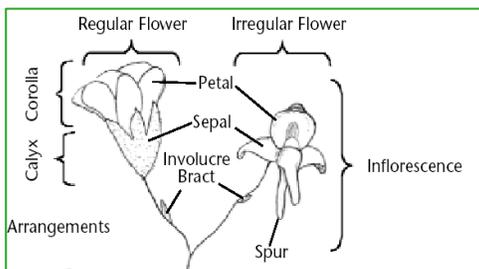
## Bearded Owl-clover (*Triphysaria versicolor* ssp. *versicolor*)

Global: G5T5, Provincial: S1, COSEWIC: E, BC List: Red



Notes on *Triphysaria versicolor* ssp. *versicolor*: A member of the family Orobanchaceae (“broomrape”), plants in the genus *Triphysaria* are generally known as “owl clovers”. This genus is closely related to the genus *Castilleja* (“paintbrushes”). BC is the northern end of this subspecies’ range in North America and this is the only subspecies of *Triphysaria* found in British Columbia. A synonym for this species is *Orthocarpus faucibarbus* ssp. *Albidus*. It is also referred to by the common name “yellowbeak owl’s-clover.”

### Plant Anatomy



### Description

**Height 10-50cm (Canadian plants rarely exceed 20 cm).**

An erect, annual herb, the stems and leaves are a greenish-brown covered in fine hairs. Leaves are alternate along the main stem. Each tapered leaf divides into 5-9 pinnate lobes, 2-8 cm long at evenly spaced intervals along the individual leaf stem. Leaves decrease to small bracts (modified leaves) toward the upper parts of stems. Lower floral bracts resemble upper leaves but become gradually less divided and the bract lobes wider. The small whitish, yellow flowers, which fade to rose, form a dense terminal spike 5-20 cm long. Individual flowers are 1.2-2.2 cm long and are club-shaped and tubular (similar to a ‘golf tee’). The flower is two-lipped and surrounded by a leaf-shaped bract .8-1.8 cm long. The upper lip is beaked and slightly longer than the lower lip. The lower lip is swollen, 3-pouched, minutely 3-toothed and distinctly hairy with purple dots along the margins. Each flower produces a single capsule .6-.9 cm long containing 30-50 dark brown seeds (.1 cm long).

### Look's Like?

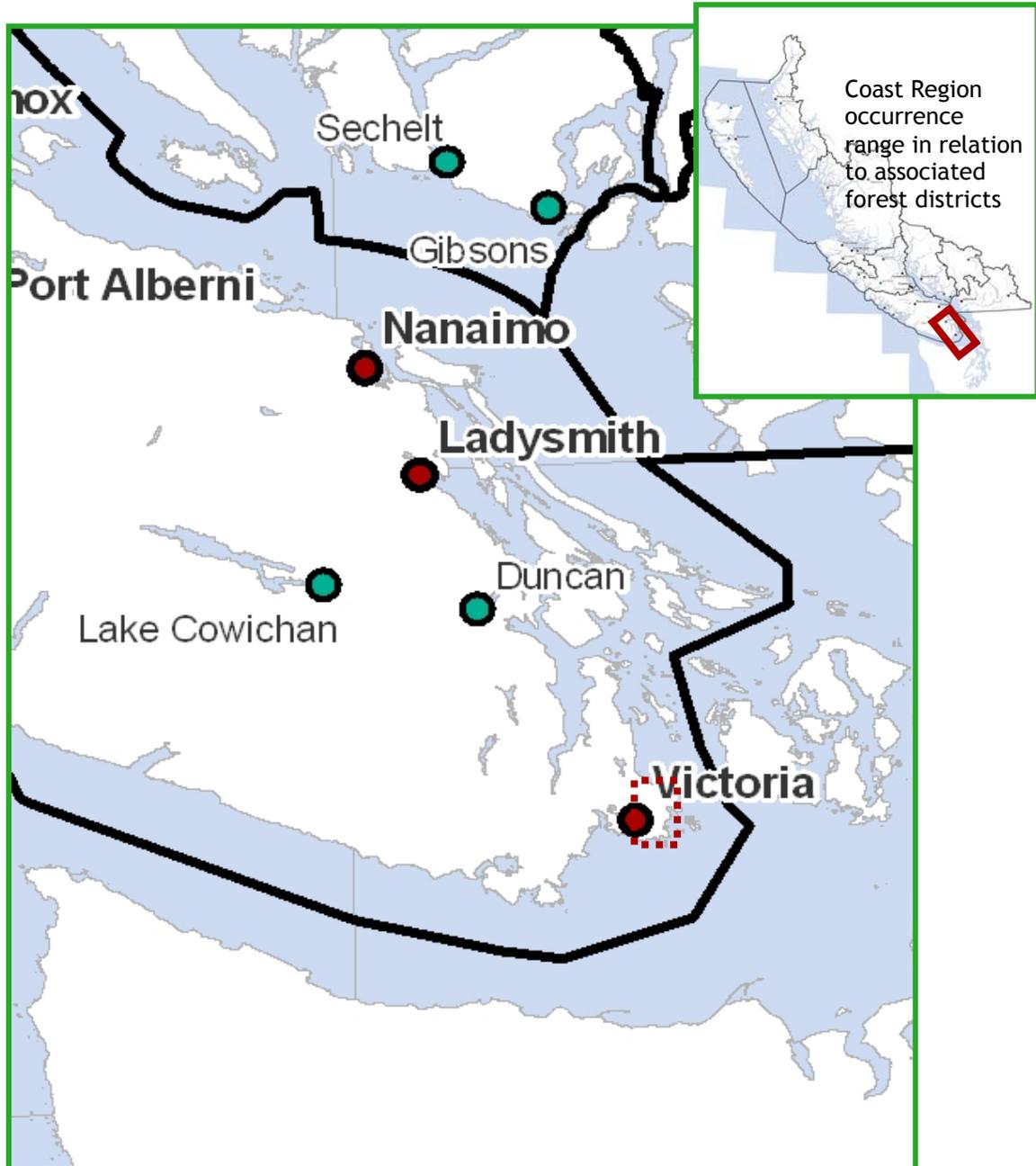
Dwarf owl-clover (*Triphysaria pusilla*) a small plant with distinctly separated and more finely divided dark reddish leaves and smaller flowers could be confused with bearded owl-clover when not in bloom.



Dwarf Owl-clover

**Distribution**

Elevations usually <10 m. Bearded owl-clover occurs in disjunct populations from northern California to Oregon (absent from Washington State). In BC it is known only from southeastern Vancouver Island. Currently, there are 7 known occurrences of which 5 have more than 1 sub-occurrence. Five unconfirmed historic localities have been documented along approximately 22 km of coastline in and near Victoria from Harling Point to near Glencoe Cove.



Bearded Owl-clover (*Triphysaria versicolor ssp. versicolor*), known range of population occurrences (red-dotted line) for the Coast Region

### Habitat Preferences

BC populations are also known to occupy seasonal seepages on slightly sloping exposed rocky outcrops along the shoreline that dry up toward the end of summer. Other species found in association include broad-leaved shooting star and common camas (in moist upper slope areas). These communities also tend to be dominated by invasive alien grasses such as orchard-grass and brome species.



### Critical Features

Bearded owl-clover is distinctly shade intolerant and is generally restricted to the shallow damp to wet soils of marine variant short-grass communities that form headland meadows and grasslands near the ocean.

This subspecies is tolerant of continuous sun, wind and salt spray and favour southern, eastern or northeastern aspects.

### Seasonal Life Cycle

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Germination in January Leaf out in February Flowering April until late May											
			Fruit production & seed dispersal April – July Die-back late June								

In BC methods of pollination are unknown but likely occur by “out-crossing” (relying on other organisms to disperse pollen between plants). This subspecies is a “hemiparasite” and parasitizes the roots of a number of associated host plants (possibly grasses) as part of its life cycle

### Threats

- ◆ The preferred ecological associations of this subspecies are geographically limited and subject to loss of natural or historic maintenance regimes (e.g. browsing of shrubs by deer, use of fire by First Nations). Suppression or removal of these mechanisms has contributed to spread and encroachment of invasive and competitive vascular plant species which may contribute to changes in soil moisture and chemistry.
- ◆ Habitat loss, encroachment and fragmentation may contribute to local extirpation events from genetic isolation and increased vulnerability to disease.
- ◆ Impacts from land management practices (e.g. mowing or pesticide application) and outdoor recreation activities (e.g. trampling).
- ◆ Competition for nutrients and shading from associated vascular plants and expansion of other more shade tolerant moss species as well as lichens.

### Conservation & Management Objectives

- ◆ Apply conservation and management objectives for this subspecies as set out in the “Recovery Strategy for Multi-species at Risk in Maritime Meadows Associated with Garry Oak Ecosystems in Canada”.
- ◆ Collection activities should be limited and apply practices identified in the Province’s “Voucher Specimen Collection, Preparation, Identification and Storage Protocol: Plants & Fungi.” Inventory activities should consider approaches and references identified in E-Flora’s Protocols For Rare Vascular Plant Surveys.

## Specific activities should include:

- ◆ A targeted inventory is needed to determine if undiscovered populations exist elsewhere within the Coast Region.
- ◆ Conduct outreach to raise awareness of this subspecies and how to identify it to improve distribution knowledge.
- ◆ Monitor existing populations on an ongoing basis to assess viability and reduce potential disturbance from land use activities.
- ◆ Where suitable habitat occurs, work with land managers and land owners to ensure development or recreational activities occur with minimal disturbance to sensitive areas and soil moisture conditions.
- ◆ Ensure controls to protect and enhance Garry oak meadow communities (e.g. removal of deer grazing pressures on oak seedlings) do not result in unfavourable changes to soil and cover conditions for other native plant species.
- ◆ Effective long-term control and reduction in competition from invasive or aggressively spreading vascular plants (e.g. invasive grasses, Scotch broom, Himalayan blackberry, species of snowberry), must form part of strategies to protect and recover populations. Disturbance to rare plant species and communities must be minimized during control activities.

This species is listed under the Federal Species at Risk Act (SARA) and may be subject to protections and prohibitions under the BC Wildlife Act. Habitat for this species may also be governed under provincial and federal regulations including the Fish Protection Act and Federal Fisheries Act as well as Regional and local municipal bylaws.

## Content for this Factsheet has been derived from the following sources

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- Polster, D. et al. 2006. [Internet] Develop with Care: Environmental Guidelines for Urban and Rural Land Development in British Columbia. Prepared for the BC Ministry of Environment. Victoria (BC).
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- USDA /NRCS. 2010. [Internet] The PLANTS Database

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Every effort has been made to ensure content accuracy. Comments or corrections should be directed to the South Coast Conservation Program: [info@sccp.ca](mailto:info@sccp.ca). Content updated August 2010.

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