

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

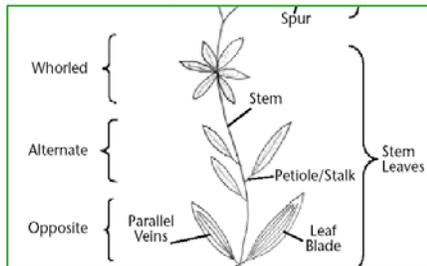
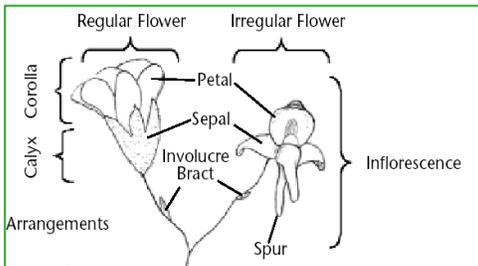
Yellow Montane Violet (*Viola praemorsa* ssp. *praemorsa*)

Global: G5T3T5, Provincial: S2, COSEWIC: E, BC List: Red



Notes on *Viola praemorsa* ssp. *praemorsa*: A member of the family Violaceae (“violets”), this subspecies is also referred to as “canary violet”. This is one of two federally at risk violets in Canada and one of four red listed violets in BC.

Plant Anatomy



Description

Height 6-30 cm. A perennial herb the somewhat hairy stems that develop from a rhizome. The dark green, egg-shaped, hairy leaves grow basally and are few or lacking on the stems. Leaf margins are usually subtly toothed to wavy. Flower stalks are 3-15 cm long with small leaves 2-10 cm long. Flowers are solitary on each stalk with five yellow petals. Brown vein-like striations occur on the bottom three petals and the bottom, longest petal (1.2-2 cm long), has a spur. The seed capsules are dry, 6-11 mm long, and contain several dark brown seeds.

Look's Like?

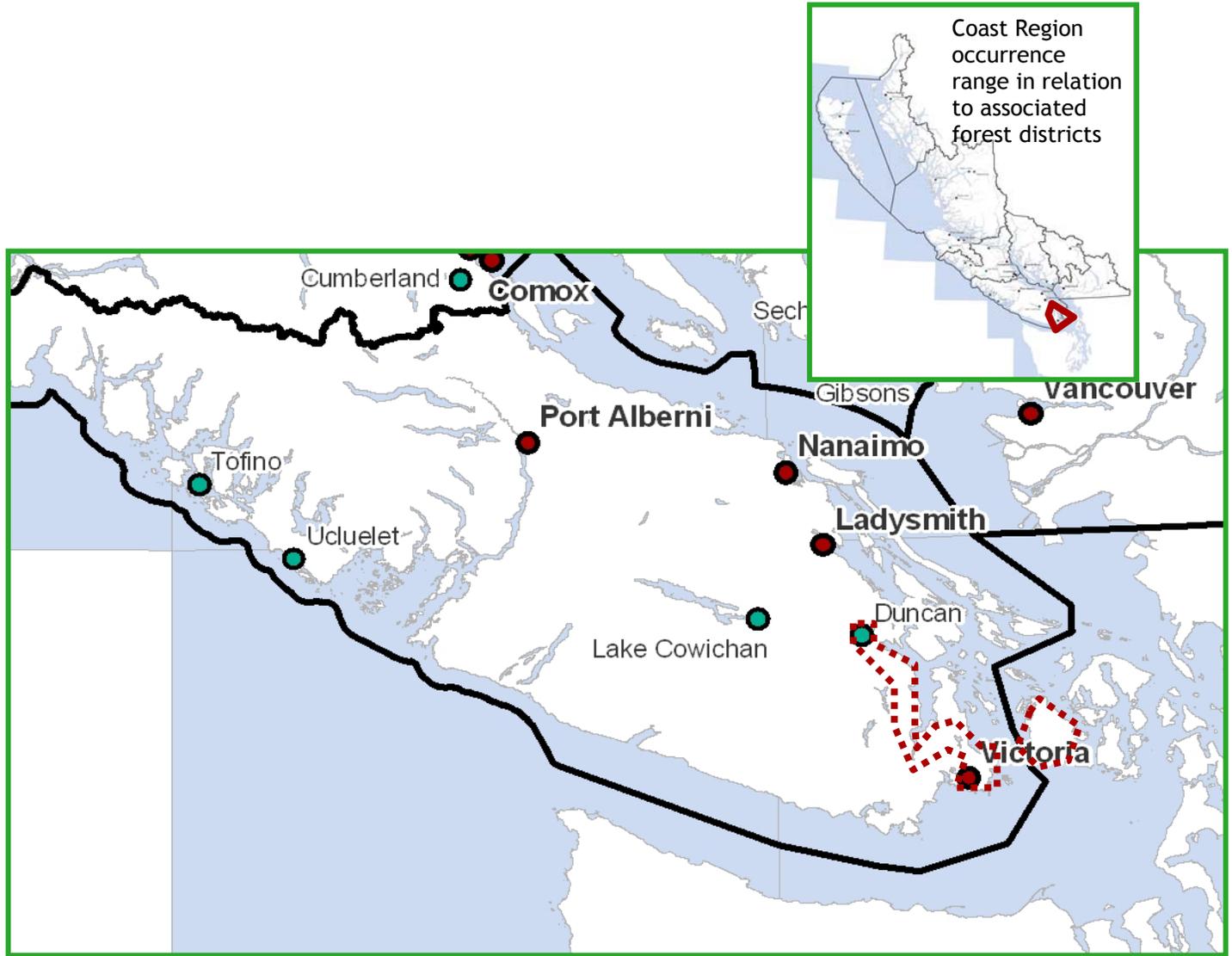
There are a number of yellow violet species that overlap in range with yellow-montane violet. Of these, the flowers of stream violet and trailing yellow violet could easily be confused for the *V. praemorsa* subspecies. However both these other species lack the distinct ovoid, hairy leaves.



Stream Violet

Distribution

Elevation 0-600 m. At the northern end of its range in BC, this subspecies is mainly restricted to populations from California west of the Cascades, and in Canada from southeastern Vancouver Island and Saltspring Island. On Vancouver Island historic populations occurred at Comox and Nanaimo (now considered extirpated). The most recent, known occurrences (14) ranged from Duncan to Victoria of which 5 or possibly 6 sites may also now be extirpated.



Yellow Montane Violet (*Viola praemorsa ssp. praemorsa*), known population occurrences (red-dotted line) for the Coast Region

Habitat Preferences

This violet occurs as part of a diverse community of other native annual and perennial wildflowers including common camas, spring gold and Pacific sanicle. Native and introduced grass species are also present. While this subspecies shows a preference for shallow soils in association with exposed rocky areas, it can grow in deeper soils with little exposed bedrock.



Critical Features

Like many plant species in Garry oak communities, this subspecies is intolerant of deep shade and is easily outcompeted by invading shrubs and tall grasses. In general, most sites where this subspecies is found are a south aspect with little or no shrub cover, although some sites may have a limited understory of snowberry and invasive Scotch broom.

Low elevation, open, moist Garry oak stands, or grassy wet meadows are the preferred habitat for this species, though it can occur on south-facing steep slopes at higher elevations (up to 600m).

Seasonal Life Cycle

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
		Shoots emerge in early March, flowers to June									
					Seeds disperse June-July, die back June - July						

This subspecies has a dual reproduction strategy, producing two types of flowers. The earlier, larger flowers bloom in April - May and require cross pollination while the later, inconspicuous self-pollinating flowers are produced late May-June. This subspecies does not reach flowering stage until at least its second year. It is probably pollinated by a variety of insect species. In mid-summer, the fruits rupture explosively and disperse seeds up to one meter from the parent plant. They may also be dispersed by insects (i.e. ants).

Threats

- ◆ This subspecies has been showing a slow decline, given limited ability to expand through seed production the BC population is unlikely to rebound through natural processes.
- ◆ The preferred ecological associations of this subspecies are geographically limited and subject to urban development and associated habitat loss
- ◆ Disturbance, trampling and picking from outdoor recreation activities.
- ◆ Shading by shrubs, taller wildflower and invasive grass species.
- ◆ Fire suppression has led to increased spread and encroachment of competitive plant species (i.e. shrubs) including native and introduced species.

Conservation & Management Objectives

- ◆ Apply conservation and management objectives for this subspecies and its habitat as set out in the “Recovery Strategy for Multi-Species at Risk in Garry Oak Woodlands in Canada” and the 2007 COSEWIC Assessment and Update Status Report on the Yellow Montane Violet, *praemorsa* subspecies, *Viola praemorsa* ssp. *praemorsa*, 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:

- ◆ Assess actual level and extent of threats to existing populations.
- ◆ A targeted inventory is needed to determine if undiscovered sub-populations exist within known locations, as well as possible new sites. 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 do not disturb or encroach on sensitive areas.
- ◆ Effective long-term control and reduction in competition from invasive or aggressively spreading vascular plants (e.g. invasive grasses, Scotch broom, Himalayan blackberry, snowberry species), must form part of strategies to protect and recover populations. Disturbance to rare plant species and communities must be minimized during control activities.

This subspecies 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

- B.C. Conservation Data Centre. 2010. [Internet] [Updated] . B.C. MoE.
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 Proulx, Gilbert et al. 2003. A Field Guide to Species at Risk in the Coast Forest Region of British Columbia. Published by International Forest Products and BC Ministry of Environment. Victoria (BC).

Prepared by: Pamela Zevit of Adamah Consultants and Matt Fairbarns Aruncus Consulting for the South Coast Conservation Program (SCCP) in partnership with: International Forest Products (Interfor), Capacity Forestry (CapFor) and the BC Ministry of Environment (BC MoE), E-Flora and E-Fauna the Electronic Atlas of the Flora and Fauna of BC, Species at Risk & Local Government: A Primer for BC. Funding for this factsheet was made possible through the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI): <http://www.sfiprogram.org/>

*¹Original account prepared by Cindy Sayre.

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

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