

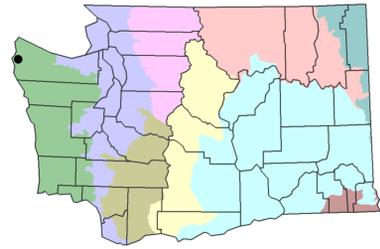
Coptis trifolia (L.) Salisb.

threeleaf goldthread

Ranunculaceae - buttercup family

status: State Threatened, BLM strategic, USFS strategic

rank: G5 / S1



General Description: Low-growing perennial forb with bright yellow to orange rhizomes. Leaves stalked, usually shiny, with 3 leaflets. Leaflets rhombic to ovate, obscurely lobed, with rounded teeth along the margins.

Floral Characteristics: Peduncles leafless, 1-flowered, 4-12 cm tall. Sepals whitish, narrowly lanceolate to spatula-shaped, 5-10 mm long. Petals about half the length of the sepals, fleshy, club-shaped, blade not flat but hollowed, with nectar at the tip. Stamens 30-60.

Fruits: Follicles 4-7, 5-10 mm long, stalks equal to or longer than the body, styler beak straight to ascending, 2-4 mm long. Identifiable May to July.

Identification Tips: *C. trifolia* is distinguished by its 3 leaflets that are less than 2 cm long and not strongly lobed, petals without a flattened blade beyond the nectary gland, 1-flowered peduncles, and follicles with straight to ascending beaks. Other species of *Coptis* in the Pacific Northwest either have more than 3 leaflets, or the leaflets are greater than 2 cm long and deeply lobed to pinnatifid. Additionally, their petals have a flattened, linear blade; flowering stalks usually with greater than 1 flower; and follicles with beaks curved back, less than 1 mm long.

Range: AK south to OR, across N.A. to Greenland, including most of Canada and the eastern U.S. to NC. Also in northeastern Asia to northern Japan.

Habitat/Ecology: Wet to mesic forests, bogs, muskegs, willow scrub and tundra, often with mosses. Prefers partially shaded, cool, wet areas, and relatively infertile, acidic, poorly drained organic soils. The WA population grows in a coastal cedar bog. Associated species include western redcedar (*Thuja plicata*), bog Labrador tea (*Ledum groenlandicum*), deer fern (*Blechnum spicant*), salal (*Gaultheria shallon*), sphagnum (*Sphagnum spp.*), bluejoint (*Calamagrostis canadensis*), false lily-of-the-valley (*Maianthemum dilatatum*), sticky tofieldia (*Triantha occidentalis* ssp. *brevistyla*), and broadleaf starflower (*Trientalis borealis* ssp. *latifolia*). *C. trifolia* has a low tolerance for disturbance.

Comments: Known in WA from 1 occurrence in Olympic National Park. This taxon is also rare in MD, NC, WV, OR, and Alberta.

References: Flora of North America 1993+, vol. 3.

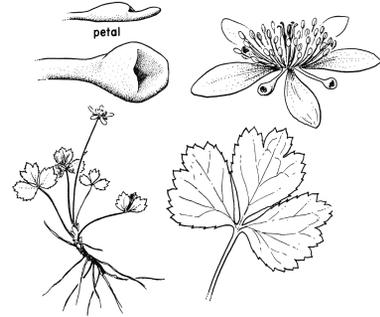


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