

Eriogonum codium Reveal, Beck & Caplow

Umtanum desert buckwheat

Polygonaceae (Buckwheat Family)

Status: State Endangered, USFWS Candidate

Rank: G1S1

General Description: Low, caespitose (tufted), herbaceous perennial, the aboveground woody stem forming highly branched mats 8-28 inches across, arising from a stout, woody taproot; leaves basal, persistent, oblanceolate to elliptic, 1/4 to 1/2 inch long, 1/8 to 1/4 inch wide, densely white-tomentose on both surfaces; flowering stems scapose, erect 3/4 to 3 1/2 inches long, tomentose, often brittle; flowers are lemon-yellow with greenish midribs and yellowish-green bases, 1/16 to 1/8 inch long.

Identification Tips: The growth habit (low, matted, caespitose perennial) and its tomentose flowers and achenes readily distinguish the new species from other members of the genus within its range.

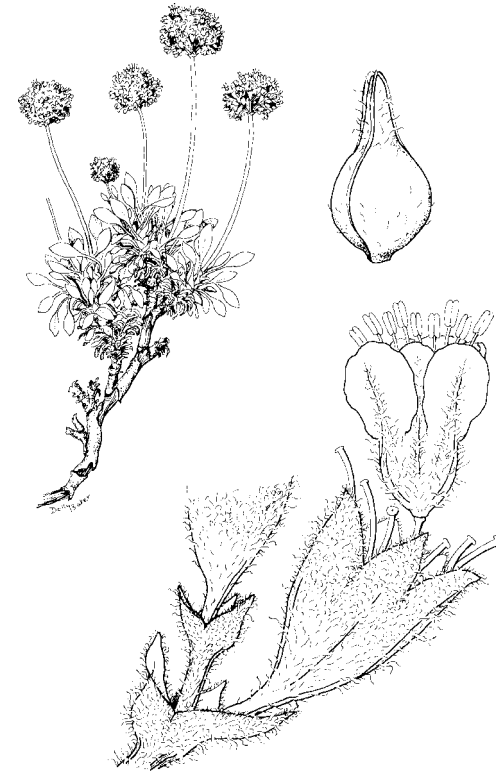
Phenology: The species flowers from May through late August, at least during wet years.

Range: The species is endemic to a very narrow range in Benton County in southcentral Washington. It is currently only known from one ridgeline in the Columbia Basin physiographic province.

Habitat: The only known population of this species occurs at elevations ranging between 1100 to 1320 feet on flat to gently sloping microsites near the top of the steep, north-facing basalt cliffs overlooking the Columbia River. It is apparently restricted to the exposed top of one particular basalt flow (the Lolo Flow). Associated species include spiny hopsage (*Grayia spinosa*), grayball sage (*Salvia dorrii*), threadleaf scorpionweed (*Phacelia linearis*), winged cryptantha (*Cryptantha pterocarya*), small eveningprimrose (*Camissonia minor*), and cheat grass (*Bromus tectorum*).

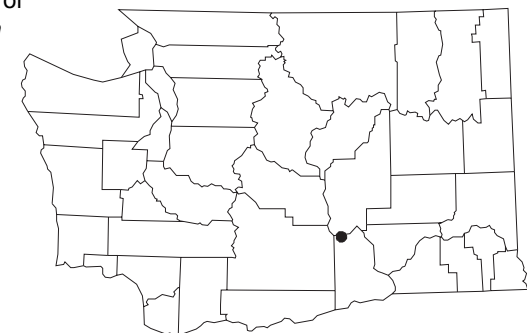
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Known distribution of
Eriogonum codium
in Washington



- Current (1980+)
- Historic (older than 1980)

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Jonathon Solt

Eriogonum codium
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Ecology: The species' restriction to exposures of one particular basalt flow may suggest a dependent relationship with the chemical composition of that flow. The relatively high water-holding capacity of the substrate has also been suggested as an important factor. The overall vegetation cover is quite low. A recent fire resulted in a decrease in the population.

State Status Comments: The species is known from only one site, most of which recently burned in a wildfire.

Inventory Needs: Ridge systems along the Columbia River in southcentral Washington should be inventoried for this species.

Threats and Management Concerns: Although not currently threatened by human activity, the area is being considered for a change in ownership and/or management responsibility. Public access could accompany such a change. ORV use and livestock grazing represent two potential significant threats. The effects of a recent fire are presently being studied.

References:

Reveal, J.L., F. Caplow, and K. Beck. 1995. *Eriogonum codium* (Polygonaceae: Eriogonoideae), A new species from southcentral Washington. *Rhodora* 97 (892): 350-356.



Katy Beck