

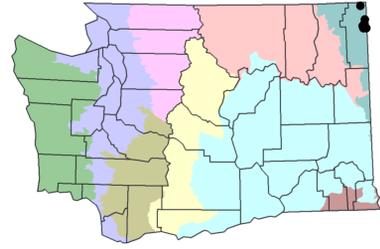
***Gaultheria hispidula* (L.) Muhl. ex Bigelow**

creeping snowberry

Ericaceae - heath family

status: State Sensitive, BLM sensitive, USFS sensitive

rank: G5 / S2



General Description: A creeping, slender-stemmed perennial shrub, brownish-bristly with appressed hairs on the stems, lower leaf surfaces, and calyces. Leaves alternate, evergreen, leathery, shiny, elliptic to obovate, with revolute margins, 4-10 mm long. Petioles 1.5-2.5 mm long.

Floral Characteristics: Flowers less than 3 mm long, growing singly in the leaf axils, subtended by two prominent ovate bracts. Corollas white, bell-shaped with united petals, 4-lobed. Stamens 8.

Fruits: Many-seeded capsule surrounded by a thickened, juicy calyx, forming a fleshy berry, clear white, 3-5 mm thick, somewhat spicy, with a distinctive wintergreen aroma. Identifiable May to June.

Identification Tips: Creeping snowberry is not a true snowberry (*Symphoricarpos* spp.), which have opposite, deciduous leaves. It can be distinguished from other *Gaultheria* species by its smaller, 4-lobed flowers, small leaves, and white fruit. Flowers of other *Gaultheria* species are mostly 5-lobed and at least 3 mm long; their leaves are usually over 1 cm long, and they have red or bluish black fruit.

Range: Labrador west to B.C., south to northern ID and WA, east from MN to ME, and south to WV. Most of the WA occurrences are in the northeastern corner of the state, but there is one record from near Mt. Pilchuck in Snohomish Co.

Habitat/Ecology: Sphagnum bogs, wet forests, and riparian meadows, particularly among areas of moist sphagnum and standing water in fir/spruce coniferous forests. It is frequently found growing in dense mats trailing over downed logs, stumps, and mossy patches. Common associates include western redcedar (*Thuja plicata*), Englemann spruce (*Picea engelmannii*), western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*), subalpine fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*), rusty menziesia (*Menziesia ferruginea*), sedges (*Carex* spp.), wood horsetail (*Equisetum sylvaticum*), and sphagnum moss (*Sphagnum* spp.). Elevations in WA: 770-1975 m (2520-6480 ft).

Comments: Threats include timber harvest, road development, creation of dikes, damming, and winter recreation. Beaver activity periodically affects hydrology. Overcollection for horticultural purposes is also a potential threat. This species is rare in Alberta and several states and possibly extirpated from OH and NC.



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