

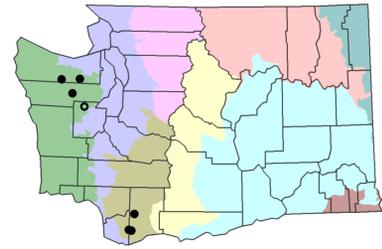
Hedysarum occidentale* Greene var. *occidentale

western sweetvetch

Fabaceae - pea family

status: State Sensitive, USFS sensitive

rank: G5T5 / S1



General Description: Herbaceous perennial with several stems 4-8 dm tall arising from a woody base. Stems greenish, usually branched above, and sparsely covered with short, appressed hairs. Leaves pinnate, 7-17 cm long. Leaflets 9-21, each 1-3 cm long, lanceolate to elliptic or ovate, with a sharply pointed to slightly notched tip, upper surface with minute brownish glandular dots, and soft-hairy beneath. Stipules brown, papery, the lower up to 3 cm long, fused and sheathlike; the upper mostly free.

Floral Characteristics: Peduncle 1-3 dm long, with 20-80 nodding rose to magenta or purple flowers, each 16-22 mm long. Keel 15-19 mm, longer than the banner. Identifiable June to September; blooms late June in WA.

Fruits: Pods smooth to very short-hairy, flat, ovate-elliptic, strongly constricted between the 1-5 seed chambers, 7-12 mm broad, with sharp-edged, irregular margins.

Identification Tips: *Hedysarum occidentale* is the only species of this genus likely to occur in western WA. It is distinguished by its distinctive fruit, which is smooth or short-hairy, strongly flattened, and constricted between seeds; pods open crosswise rather than lengthwise as do most other members of the pea family. Other useful characters include its herbaceous growth, compound leaves with opposite leaflets, and purple to pinkish purple flowers.

Range: Vancouver Island, B.C. and Alberta, south through ID, MT, WY, UT, and CO. Rare in the WA Cascades; disjunct in the Olympic Mts.

Habitat/Ecology: Rocky exposed sites in the Cascade and Olympic Mts., including meadows, shrub fields, bare rock outcrops, boulder fields, and talus slopes. Elevations in WA: 960-1980 m (3150-6500 ft). Associated species include Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), noble fir (*Abies procera*), pinemat manzanita (*Arctostaphylos nevadensis*), vine maple (*Acer circinatum*), thinleaf huckleberry (*Vaccinium membranaceum*), juniper (*Juniperus communis*), beargrass (*Xerophyllum tenax*), lichens, and mosses. Seeds of *Hedysarum occidentale* require ripening and scarification prior to germination.

Comments: The weedy common hawkweed (*Hieracium lachenalii*) is often associated with *Hedysarum occidentale* and may pose a threat. Recreational activities threaten some populations. This species is also rare in B.C. and UT.

References: Cronquist et al. 1972-94, vol. 3; Kaye 1997.

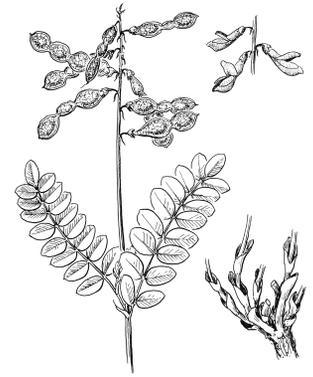


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