

GEUM RIVALE L.
Water Avens

FAMILY: Rosaceae

HABIT: Tall, erect herbaceous, rhizomatous perennial, to 6 dm.; flowering May-July.

SIMILAR SPECIES: This is our only species of *Geum* that has large (to $\frac{3}{4}$ in.), nodding, campanulate flowers with purple sepals and yellowish to buff petals. These distinctive characteristics, combined with the habitat, make this plant unlikely to be misidentified.

TOTAL RANGE: Nfld. and Que. to Alta., s. to NJ, PA, IN and MI; s. to CA in the west.

STATE RANGE (as of 2008): Post-1980 records are from Ashtabula, Geauga, Portage, Summit, and Trumbull counties. Pre-1980 records are from Champaign, Cuyahoga, Lake, and Ottawa counties.

HABITAT: Swamps and wet meadows, low wet areas, lake shores, marshes, wooded margins of bogs, fens.

HAZARDS: Drying of the habitat, overshadowing in late succession, harvesting of whole plant by natural foods foragers (see comments).

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: Unknown; possibly good due to perennial habit.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: Collect mature flowering or fruiting material. Collect above ground parts only; leave the rhizomes in the ground. Sight records are acceptable and collecting should be minimized. When collecting in bogs and fens, care should be taken to avoid disturbance to the habitat.

COMMENTS: This plant is listed in several popular herbals and edible wild plant guides. The perennial rhizome is used to produce a chocolate-like beverage that is claimed to be a remedy for diarrhea and dysentery and an appetite and digestion improver. Infusions of the whole plant are claimed to be remedies for nausea and respiratory congestion. Unfortunately, when used in this manner, the whole plant is destroyed, making the recovery of the population difficult. In this regard, efforts should be made to make wild foods foragers aware that this species is rare in Ohio and should not be harvested.

SELECTED REFERENCES:

Gleason, H.A., and A. Cronquist. 1991. Manual of vascular plants of northeastern United States and adjacent Canada. New York Botanical Garden, Bronx, New York. 910 pp.

Lust, J. 1974. The herb book. Bantam Books, NY. pp. 388-389.

Peterson, L. 1977. A field guide to edible wild plants. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston.



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