

SFI Biodiversity Species Fact Sheet

Canby's Mountain-lover (*Paxistima canbyi*)

Globally Critically Imperiled Plant Species; State Rank: S1 (critically imperiled) Global Rank: G2 (imperiled)

Identification

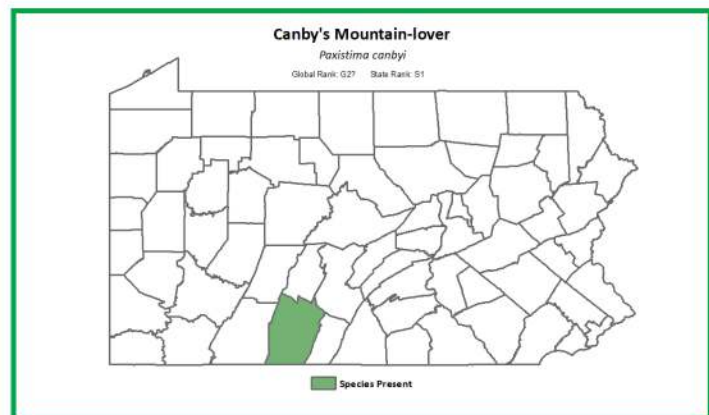
This small evergreen shrub is 8 - 16 in tall with simple, opposite leaves about 0.5 inches long. The leaves will sometimes become copper-green to bronze in cold winters. In May, Canby's Mountain-lover has small, 0.25 in green flowers with four petals and four sepals (protective leaf-like structures). The flowers are found where the upper leaf stem joins the stalk, or the upper leaf axil. Flowers bear 2-valved seed capsules.



Photo Credit: Penn Live

Biology-Natural History

This plant flowers during April and May and bears fruit in August and September. This plant reproduces sexually through fruiting, and also asexually by forming colonies. Colonies are formed when low growing branches develop new roots and shoots, eventually forming a separate but genetically identical plant to the parent. Another common name for this plant is 'rat-stripper' because rats will strip leaves and bark as a winter food source. *Praxistima myrsinites*, a separate species found in the Mountain West and Pacific Coast, has blood red or maroon flowers. It is unknown how the two disjunct populations diverged.



Distribution & Habitat

Canby's mountain-lover is a rare plant of the central Appalachians, ranging from Tennessee and North Carolina to the southern counties of Ohio and Pennsylvania. Canby's mountain-lover is often found growing over exposed shale or limestone formations on west and northwestern facing slopes. There are three known populations in Pennsylvania.

Conservation Concerns

Quarrying and railroad expansions are noted threats. The invasive *Euonymus* scale, a non-native insect from Asia also feeds on Canby's Mountain-lover. This insect uses specialized mouthparts to pierce the tissue of the plant and suck out plant fluid. This can defoliate the plant, eventually causing dieback and mortality. Canby's mountain-lover is a candidate species for federal listing by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It is also listed as endangered in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Ohio and Tennessee; and threatened in Kentucky and Virginia. Of the three known Pennsylvania populations, two out of three populations are located and protected.

Management Practices

Monitoring and treating wild populations for *Euonymus* scale is an important management strategy. If anyone observes this plant in Pennsylvania they should call the jurisdictional agency, DCNR Bureau of Forestry at 717-787-3444.