

# Goldenseal

## *Hydrastis canadensis*

### Description

Goldenseal is an herbaceous perennial with a hairy erect stem that may grow to 1 foot (ca 30 cm) or more in height. The plant receives its common name from the thick yellow underground stem, which is often considered to have medicinal value. The number of leaves per stem is usually 3, with a stalked pair at the top and another long-stalked one at the base. The leaves enlarge greatly after flowering. The leaves are veiny-looking on the surface and prominently 5-7 lobed, often with a maple-like shape, and are also finely toothed on the margin. The white flower, appearing in April and May, occurs singly on a short stalk above the base of the uppermost leaf. The flower has no petals and loses the sepals quickly, so the bloom consists only of the male stamens and the female pistils. The individual fruits are 3/16 inch (5 mm) in length and 1-2 seeded, and at maturity are aggregated together and resemble a raspberry (but should not be ingested).



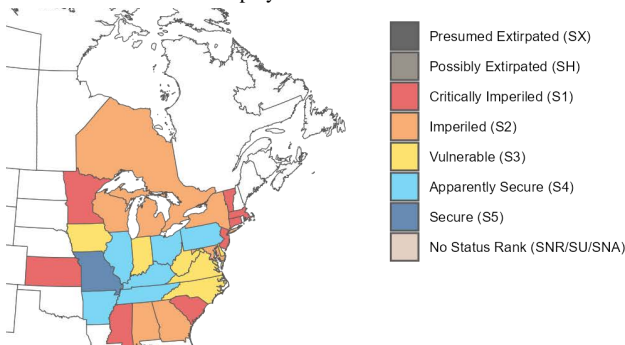
Photo source: Andrew Strassman (PNHP)

### Distribution & Habitat

Goldenseal ranges from southern New England to Minnesota and south into Georgia and Mississippi. In Pennsylvania, it has been documented historically mostly in the southern and western counties. It grows in moist woods, particularly on limestone and diabase substrates.

### North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2025



### Conservation Considerations

The viability of populations of Goldenseal may be threatened by intensive logging, invasive species, excessive deer browse, and especially collection of the plant for the herbal medicine trade.

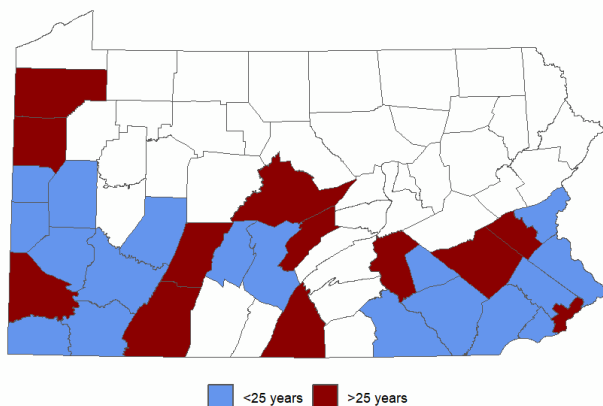
### NatureServe conservation status ranks

**G3G4** – Apparently globally secure; **S4** – Apparently secure in Pennsylvania

### Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers Goldenseal to be a species of special concern, based on the limited number of locations that have been recently confirmed and potential of collection for herbal medicine. It has a PA legal rarity status and a PABS suggested rarity status of Vulnerable.

Golden-seal (*Hydrastis canadensis*)



■ <25 years ■ >25 years

### References

- NatureServe. 2025. NatureServe Explorer [web application] NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at <https://explorer.natureserve.org> (Accessed: May 8, 2025)
- Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program. 2025.
- Rhoads, A.F. and W.M. Klein, Jr. 1993. The Vascular Flora of Pennsylvania. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Rhoads, A.F. and T.A. Block. 2007. The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.