



Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

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Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

Broom Crowberry *Corema conradii* (Torr.) Torr. ex Loudon

State Status: **None**
Federal Status: **None**

DESCRIPTION: Broom Crowberry (*Corema conradii*), a member of the heath family (Ericaceae), is a low-growing evergreen shrub of barrens, heathlands, and dunes. It has short, needle-like leaves and small, purplish flowers that bloom very early in spring.

AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION: Broom Crowberry is a densely branched evergreen shrub, up to 20 inches (50 cm) in height and 6.5 feet (2 m) wide. It has linear, alternate leaves up to 0.2 inches (6 mm) long. The flowers are reddish or purplish, and lack petals. They are borne in small, sessile, terminal heads and are subtended by sepal-like bracts. The fruit is a very small drupe (<0.1 inch; 1.5 mm) with three seeds.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Broom Crowberry is similar in appearance to a common habitat associate, Golden Heather (*Hudsonia ericoides*). Golden Heather is also a low-growing, spreading, evergreen shrub of barrens, dunes, and heathlands, with linear, alternate leaves. However, unlike Broom Crowberry, Golden Heather has axillary, solitary flowers, with definite pedicels, and five yellow petals. Introduced heathers (*Calluna vulgaris*;

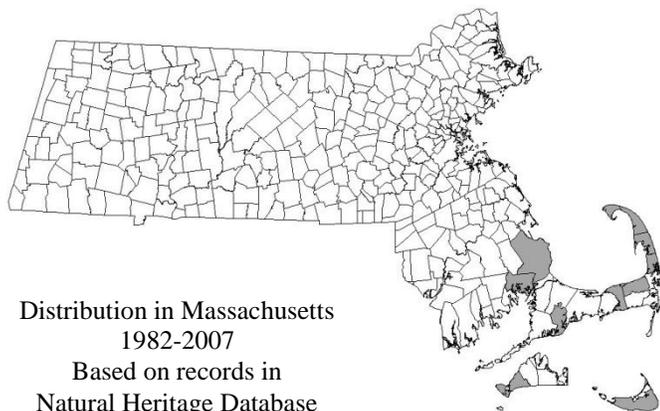


Photo by Mary Beth Hanley

Erica spp.) are superficially similar to Broom Crowberry, but have opposite or whorled leaves, and whitish or pinkish flowers that bloom in mid to late summer.

RANGE: Broom Crowberry is endemic to northeastern North America, and occurs in Nova Scotia, Quebec, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Maine, Massachusetts, New York, and New Jersey. Broom Crowberry is rare in Quebec, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Maine, Massachusetts, New York, and New Jersey.

HABITAT IN MASSACHUSETTS: In Massachusetts, Broom Crowberry inhabits sandy, dry, low-nutrient soils of open heathlands, dunes, and pitch pine-scrub oak barrens. It requires open habitat with minimal shade; periodic disturbance, such as fire, is required to maintain suitable habitat conditions. Associated plants include Pitch Pine (*Pinus rigida*), Scrub Oak (*Quercus ilicifolia*), Bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), Golden Heather (*Hudsonia ericoides*), Canadian Rockrose



Distribution in Massachusetts
1982-2007

Based on records in
Natural Heritage Database

A Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Massachusetts State Wildlife Action Plan

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

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(*Helianthemum canadense*), Common Hairgrass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*), and Reindeer Lichen (*Cladonia rangiferina*).

POPULATION STATUS IN MASSACHUSETTS:

Broom Crowberry is currently known from Barnstable, Dukes, and Nantucket Counties, and is historically known from Essex County.

THREATS: Threats to Broom Crowberry include conversion of habitat for development, exclusion of disturbance (or rather, the resulting over-shading from habitat succession to dense woody vegetation cover), deer browse, and trampling. The hostile environment of barrens excludes many exotic invasive plants, but a few species, such as Scotch Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), may become established; the impacts of exotic plants on Broom Crowberry are not well-documented.

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS: The exact management needs of Broom Crowberry are not known. Research has shown that fire disturbance is beneficial in maintaining populations of Broom Crowberry. Though adult plants are often killed during a fire, burning maintains habitat quality by removing competing or over-shading woody vegetation, and providing a hospitable seed bed; seeds establish readily following fires.

Habitat sites should be monitored for over-shading caused by habitat succession to dense shrub or tree cover. If trampling or erosion are threats in recreational areas, trails can be stabilized or re-routed.

Flowering time in Massachusetts

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

Updated 2015

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