



## Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

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## Dwarf Scouring-rush

*Equisetum scirpoides* Michx.

State Status: Special Concern

Federal Status: None

**Description:** This member of the Horsetail family is 4-8 inches (10-20 cm.) tall, evergreen and appears as a dark green tuft of wiry stems. Dwarf Scouring-rush has slender stems which may curve upward or lie flat along the ground and widely branching rhizomes. The stem has 3 to 4 broad and deeply concave ridges. Triangular sheaths surrounding the stems are less than an inch (3-4 mm.) long and have 3 or 4 teeth. Small (3-5mm), dark cones develop in late summer.

**Habitat in Massachusetts:** Dwarf Scouring-rush is found on moist banks and seepy wooded slopes and hillsides with springs and streams: they are often in ecotones between upland and wetland sites. Dwarf Scouring-rush is known to grow in subacidic and acid glacially derived soil. Associated species often include tree elements of the Northern Hardwoods forest including Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*), Sugar Maple (*A. saccharum*), White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*), Eastern Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), and Yellow Birch (*Betula alleghaniensis*). The hemlock provides shade and a cool habitat. Shrubs may include Striped Maple (*Acer pensylvanica*), Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), and Low Raspberry (*Rubus pubescens*). The herbaceous layer may be sparse. However, a variety of species, including repeated occurrences of non-natives, have been reported in the area of Dwarf Scouring-rush populations: including Cinnamon Fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*), Small Enchanter's Nightshade (*Circaea alpina*), Colt's-foot (*Tussilago farfara*), tree seedlings, other horsetails, and liverworts and mosses.

**POPULATION STATUS:** Dwarf Scouring-rush is listed under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act as a Species of Special Concern. All listed species are protected from killing, collecting, possessing, or sale and from activities that would destroy habitat and thus directly or indirectly cause mortality or disrupt critical behaviors. Twenty-three current (1985-2010) occurrences have been reported and fourteen historical occurrences recorded. One reason for its rarity in Massachusetts is because it is



*Dwarf Scouring-rush:* The photo on top shows a typical mass of plant stems. Photo: Jennifer Garrett, NHESP.

*Illustration:* USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. An illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions. 3 vols. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. Vol. 1: 42.

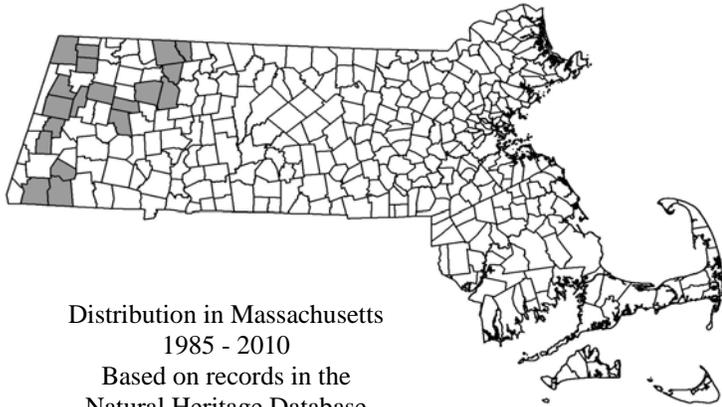
near the southern edge of its range. It is considered rare in most of the states on the southern edge of its distribution. Globally, Nature Serve ranks Dwarf Scouring-rush as G5, Secure.

**RANGE:** Dwarf Scouring-rush has a circumboreal distribution. In North America, it extends across Canada and south into Connecticut and west through Illinois, Iowa, South Dakota, and Wyoming and then into Washington.

**For More Information See**

NatureServe. 2010. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. (Accessed: December 10, 2010 ).

USDA, NRCS. 2010. The PLANTS Database (<http://plants.usda.gov>, 10 December 2010). National Plant Data Center, Baton Rouge, LA 70874-4490 USA.



Distribution in Massachusetts  
1985 - 2010  
Based on records in the  
Natural Heritage Database

**Management and Threats:** Most of the occurrences of Dwarf Scouring-rush have invasive species near the population. Competition from non-native invasive species can be a threat through shading and loss of space for the native species. Monitoring and removal of competing vegetation should be considered as a management strategy where appropriate. An additional likely problem in many populations is that the hemlock overstory may be damaged and thinned by Woolly Adelgids, another invasive species that infects and kills hemlock trees. All active management of rare plant populations (including invasive species removal) is subject to review under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act, and should be planned in close consultation with the Massachusetts Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program.

Several of the populations of Dwarf Scouring-rush are near roads: widening of roads and creation, formal and informal, of pull-off sites should be reviewed with regard to the effects on the Dwarf Scouring-rush.