

## *Crassula connata* – Erect Pigmyweed

**English name:** Erect Pigmyweed

**Other English names:** Sand Pigmyweed

**Scientific name:** *Crassula connata* (Ruiz & Pav.) A. Berger

**Other scientific names:** *Crassula erecta* (Hook. & Arn.) A. Berger; *Tillaea erecta* Hook. & Arn.

**Family:** *Crassulaceae* (Stonecrop Family)

### Risk status

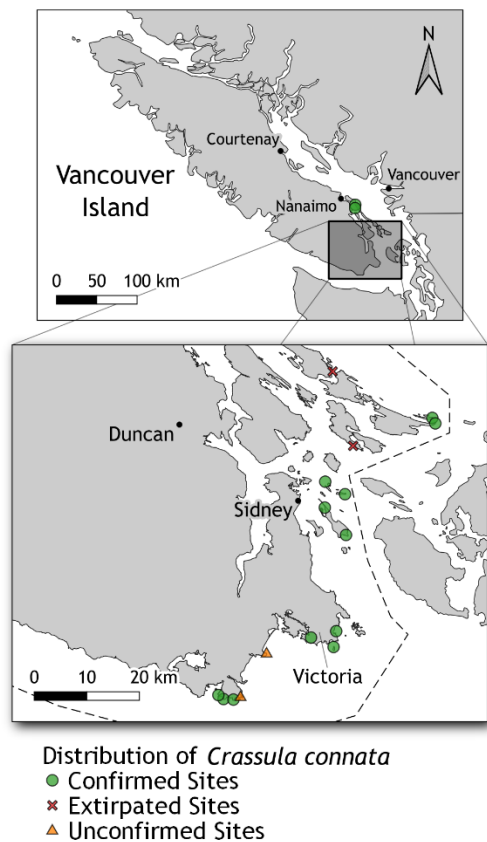
BC: vulnerable (S2S3); blue-listed

Canada: vulnerable (N2N3)

Global: secure (G5)

Elsewhere: Washington – critically imperiled (S1), Oregon, California, Arizona, Texas – not ranked (SNR)

**Range/Known distribution:** Erect Pigmyweed occurs in western North America, from Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands (and San Juan Island in Washington) south to Baja California and east to Texas. The Salish Sea populations appear to be 600 km north of the nearest occurrences in its main range. Currently in British Columbia there are 20 reported occurrences.



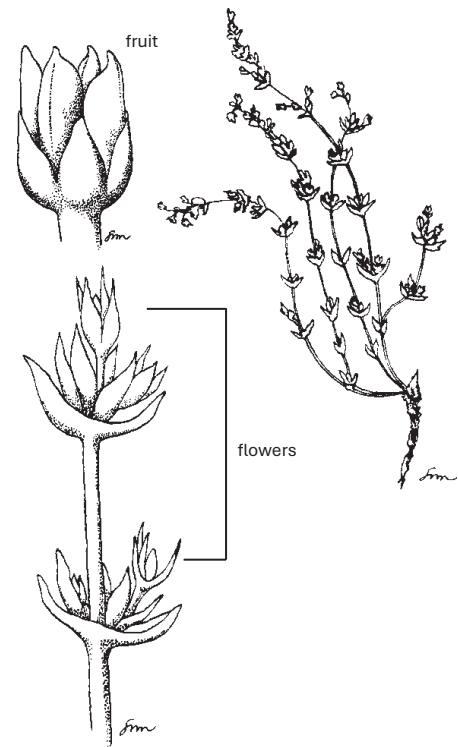
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**Field description:** Erect Pigmyweed is a low greenish annual herb that roots at the nodes. Its stems are ascending or erect, 2-6 cm tall, freely branching, and turn reddish brown with age. The leaves of Erect Pigmyweed are opposite, entire (untoothed), succulent, glabrous (smooth and hairless), oblong- to egg-shaped and 1.5-3 mm long. Its flowers are borne in clusters in the leaf axils. They are 4-parted, greenish-white and short-stalked. The flower sepals are longer than the petals and are cup-shaped. The small fruits (less than 2 mm long) are follicles (a type of dry fruit that splits along one side) with one to two seeds.

**Identification tips:** The small size, succulent leaves and greenish-white flowers distinguish Erect Pigmyweed from other native succulent species such as stonecrops (*Sedum* spp.). Erect Pigmyweed differs from Water Pigmyweed (*Crassula aquatica*) in having flowers arranged in clusters rather than singly. The invasive Moss Pigmyweed\* (*Crassula tillaea*) looks very similar to Erect Pigmyweed but usually has flower parts in threes rather than fours and its foliage tends to be bright red when mature, rather than green to dull brownish-red as in Erect Pigmyweed



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**Life history:** Erect Pigmyweed is an ephemeral winter annual. It requires winter and spring moisture to germinate and grow. Its pollinators are unknown. Germination occurs as early as December and seeds may disperse by water.

**Habitat:** Erect Pigmyweed inhabits wet to moist vernal pools on coastal bluffs and on shallow soils along the margins of rock outcrops. Substrates vary from shale and shingle to sand and saline mud. Associated native herbaceous species include Red-maids (*Calandrinia ciliata*), Gumweed (*Grindelia*), Blinks (*Montia fontana*), Western Parsley-piert (*Aphanes occidentalis*), Scouler's Popcornflower (*Plagiobothrys scouleri*), Slender Plantain (*Plantago elongata*), and Dwarf Owl-clover (*Triphysaria pusilla*) as well as non-native species such as Mossy Stonecrop\*, Early Hairgrass\* (*Aira praecox*), Barren Fescue\* (*Vulpia bromoides*), Common Stork's-bill\* (*Erodium cicutarium*) and Bulbous Bluegrass\* (*Poa bulbosa*).

Erect Pigmyweed occurs at elevations of up to 200 m in Canada but is usually found at less than 30 m.

Erect Pigmyweed requires bare, open soil and full sun. It takes advantage of shallow, eroding soil margins on rocky outcrops where few other species grow. In its seasonally dry habitat, it is dependent on winter and spring moisture availability to complete its life cycle.

**Why the species is at risk:** The limited occurrence of the specific habitat of this species makes it vulnerable, particularly to residential waterfront development and trail building. Some sites are on private land and therefore remain unprotected. The habitat where it occurs also tends to large populations of invasive annual plants, which may crowd it out.

**What you can do to help this species:** The most important step in most public areas is to direct people and pets away from populations of Erect Pigmyweed to reduce trampling damage. Management practices should be tailored to the needs of the site. Potential management tools will depend on the specific circumstances and may require experimentation prior to implementation. Before taking any action, expert advice should be obtained, and no action taken without it.

### References

- Bywater, M., and G.E. Wickens. 1984. New world species of the genus *Crassula*. Kew Bull. 39:699-728.
- Moran, R. 1992. Pygmy weed (*Crassula connata*) in Western North America. Cactus and Succulent Journal 64(5):223-231.
- Moran, R. In: Flora of North America Editorial Committee, eds. 1993+. Flora of North America North of Mexico [Online]. 25+ vols. New York and Oxford. Vol. 8. <http://beta.floranorthamerica.org/Crassula> Accessed March 2 2024.

For further information, contact the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team, or see the web site at: [www.goert.ca](http://www.goert.ca)

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\*Refers to non-native species.