Rotala ramosior (L.) Koehne
lowland toothcup
Lythraceae (Loosestrife Family)

Status: State Threatened
Rank: G5S1

General Description: *Rotala ramosior* is a small, glabrous annual with simple or branched, erect to prostrate stems that are up to 6 in. (15 cm) tall. The opposite, narrowly lance-shaped leaves are ½ to 1 in. (1 ½ to 3 cm) long and taper gradually to the petiole. The inconspicuous white flowers are sessile in the axils and have a bell-shaped, shallowly 4-lobed hypanthium that becomes larger with age. The fruit capsule is spherical and is subtended by the serrated hypanthium.

Identification Tips*:* *Rotala ramosior* may be distinguished from *Ammannia* spp. by its white flowers; *Ammannia* spp. flowers range from lavender to scarlet. Similarly, *Ammannia* spp. have sessile, clasping leaf bases, while *R. ramosior's* leaves are petioled.

Phenology: Flowering June to August.

Range: *Rotala ramosior* is found from California to Washington, south to Mexico and the West Indies, and east to the Atlantic coast. It is also found in British Columbia and Ontario, Canada. *R. ramosior* is peripheral and scattered in Washington and is present in wetland areas on the Hanford Reach of the Columbia River.

Habitat: This species is found in damp areas in fine sand and silt. It grows in wet, swampy places, lakes and pond margins, and along free flowing river reaches in association with rush (*Juncus)* and spike-rush (*Eleocharis)* species. Populations in Washington frequently occur with grand red-stem (*Ammannia robusta),* Drummond's hemicarpha *(Lipocarpha aristulata),* slender flatsedge *(Cyperus bipartitus),* southern mudwort *(Limosella acaulis),* yellow-seed false-pimpernel *(Lindernia dubia)*, and, in some cases, Columbia yellow-cress *(Rorippa columbiae).* In Washington, *R. ramosior* has been found from 200 to 2259 ft (61 to 689 m) elevation.

Ecology: *Rotala ramosoir* is found in riparian wetlands growing below high water often located in a community of small emergent annuals. This community type in Washington has been flooded by large hydroelectric developments and is now largely restricted to free-flowing reaches of the Columbia River.

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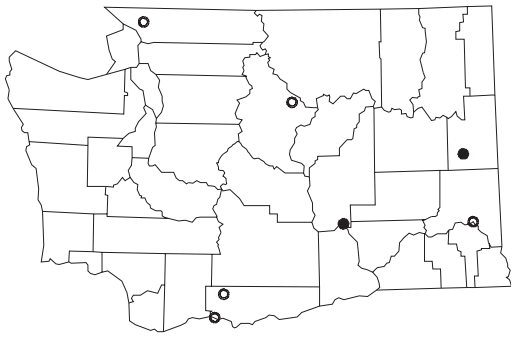
Known distribution of *Rotala ramosior* in Washington



● Current (1980+)
○ Historic (older than 1980)

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Photos Courtesy of Flora ID Northwest

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State Status Comments: Most populations are presently known to occur along the shores of Hanford Reach in Benton, Grant, and Franklin counties. In this area, there are a total of 29 sub-populations with several hundred to several thousand plants in each. Of the four historic populations in Klickitat, Whatcom, Chelan, and Whitman counties, two now lie behind dams. Localities of older collections made along the Columbia and Snake Rivers may have possibly been flooded by hydroelectric developments.

Inventory Needs: Free-flowing sections of other major eastern Washington rivers and backwater areas along reservoirs should be inventoried for this species.

Threats and Management Concerns: This species is vulnerable to upstream and downstream hydrologic development.

References:

Flora ID Northwest. 2001. *Plants of Washington: interactive keys and color photos*. Pendleton, OR. CD-Rom.

Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey and J.W. Thompson. 1961. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Part 3: Saxifragaceae to Ericaceae.* University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA. 614 pp.

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