

## ***Cimicifuga elata* Nutt.**

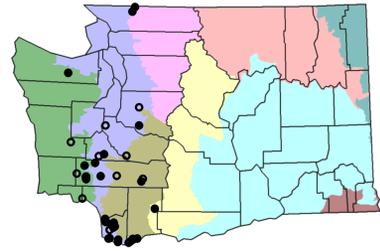
synonym: *Actaea elata* (Nutt.) Prantl

tall bugbane

Ranunculaceae - buttercup family

status: State Sensitive, Federal Species of Concern

rank: G3 / S3



**General Description:** Perennial from a rhizome, 12-18 dm tall, finely hairy, somewhat glandular above. Leaves large, downy-hairy above, smooth below, biternate, with 9-17 leaflets. Petioles up to 40 cm. Leaflets with 5-7 lobes, coarsely toothed margins, and heart-shaped bases; shape similar to maple leaves.

**Floral Characteristics:** Panicle with racemelike branches of many close white flowers. Pedicels 1-8 mm long, densely hairy. Petals absent. Sepals 3-4 mm long, white or pinkish, falling early, thus giving the panicle branches a bottlebrush appearance of remaining long white stamens and pistils. Stamens 20-30. Flowers late May to early August.

**Fruits:** Dry, flat, oblong follicles, 9-12 mm long, sessile or nearly so, containing about 10 red to purplish brown seeds.

**Identification Tips:** *C. elata* is a tall understory plant of lowland forests, distinctive when in bloom. It is similar to *Actaea rubra* when not in flower. However, *A. rubra* is a smaller plant (4-10 dm tall); the leaves are smaller, sparsely hairy to smooth, 2-3 times ternate, and more deeply lobed. When fertile, *A. rubra* has a short, wide spike of white flowers that mature into red or white berries.

**Range:** Southwestern B.C. to southern OR, west of the Cascade range.

**Habitat/Ecology:** In or along margins of mixed, mature or old-growth forests, including mesic coniferous or mixed coniferous-deciduous stands; frequently on north- or east-facing slopes. Associated species include Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), western redcedar (*Thuja plicata*), big-leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), red alder (*Alnus rubra*), vine maple (*Acer circinatum*), oceanspray (*Holodiscus discolor*), hazelnut (*Corylus cornuta*), and sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*). Elevations range from 30-860 m (100-2800 ft), with the majority of sites below 200 m (700 ft). Old-growth forests with scattered canopy openings provide optimal light conditions.

**Comments:** Most populations in WA are relatively small (fewer than 50 plants). Threats include habitat alteration from timber management, invasive species, residential development, and trampling from recreational use. This taxon is also rare in OR and Canada.

**References:** Flora of North America 1993+, vol. 3; Lee & Park 2004; Ramsey 1965.



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