

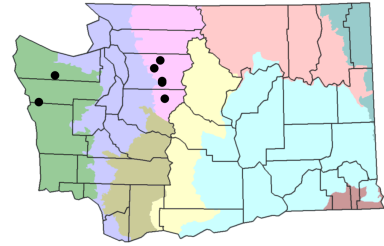
Coptis asplenifolia Salisb.

spleenwort-leaved goldthread

Ranunculaceae - buttercup family

status: State Sensitive, BLM sensitive, USFS sensitive

rank: G5 / S2



General Description: Adapted from Douglas et al. (1998-2002):

Perennial rhizomatous herb with yellow to pale brown rhizomes. Leaves twice pinnate with pinnatifid leaflets, shiny, fernlike, toothed, evergreen, all basal, stalked, 4-17 cm long.

Floral Characteristics: Flowering stalks leafless, erect, 8-12 cm tall in flower, to 35 cm in fruit. Inflorescence a cyme with 2-3 nodding flowers and minute bracts. Petals 5-7, greenish white, clawed, linear-lanceolate, bent back, flattened, and shorter than the sepals. Sepals 5-7, pale greenish white, 6-15 x 0.3-1 mm. Flowers late April to May.

Fruits: Follicles, 6-10 per flower head, oblong, 7-10 mm long, beak curved back.

Identification Tips: *Coptis laciniata* is similar, but more common and widespread in the western Olympic Mts., extending south into northwestern CA. *C. asplenifolia* has at least 5 main leaflets per leaf stalk, is generally twice pinnate, and the flowering stalk is taller than the leaves when in flower. In contrast, *C. laciniata* leaves are once to twice ternate, and the flowering stalk is shorter than the leaves when flowering.

Range: Widespread in coastal areas from southeastern AK to southern B.C. The species is at the southern extent of its range in WA.

Habitat/Ecology: Moist, cool, old forests with a well-developed litter layer, from 30 to 930 m (100-3040 ft) elevation. In coastal B.C., *C. asplenifolia* is commonly associated with Girgensohn's sphagnum (*Sphagnum girgensohnii*) and deer fern (*Blechnum spicant*). In coastal WA it occurs adjacent to wetlands, rivers, streams, or lakes, or on higher ground in areas with high precipitation and low evaporative stress. Sites are generally on gentle lower slopes and northerly aspects. Known populations from the North Cascades occur in old-growth forests. Associated species include silver fir (*Abies amabilis*), western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*), salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*), Alaska huckleberry (*Vaccinium alaskaense*), and western redcedar (*Thuja plicata*). There is one record of it growing with boreal bedstraw (*Galium kamtschaticum*), another relatively rare species.

Comments: Known threats include trampling from recreational use, disturbance by trail maintenance crews, and foraging by deer.

References: Douglas et al. 1998-2002, vol. 4; Flora of North America 1993+, vol. 3.

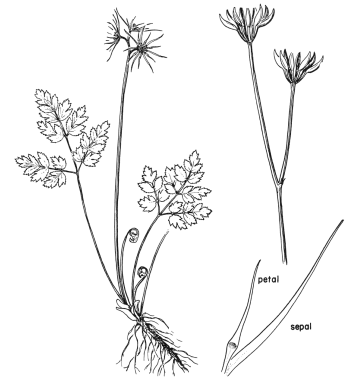
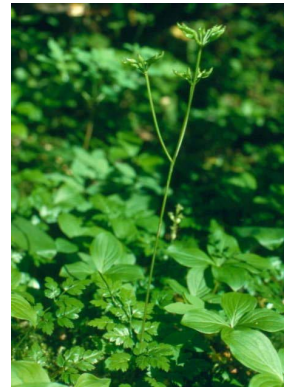


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