

# ***Eriogonum codium*** Reveal, Caplow & R.A. Beck

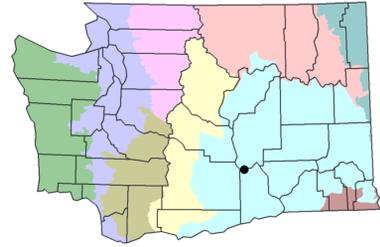
Umtanum desert buckwheat

Polygonaceae - buckwheat family

status: State Endangered, Federal Proposed

Threatened, BLM sensitive

rank: G1 / S1



**General Description:** Low, tufted, herbaceous perennial, arising from a stout, woody taproot; the aboveground woody stem forms highly branched mats (1) 2-7 (9) dm across. Leaves basal, persistent, blades oblanceolate to elliptic, (5) 6-12 x 3-6 mm, densely white-woolly on both surfaces.

**Floral Characteristics:** Flowering stems leafless, erect, 2-9 cm long, white-woolly, often brittle; inflorescences terminal, headlike, up to 2 x 4 cm, divided into many involucre. Involucres tubular, bell-shaped, 2.5-4 x 2-2.5 mm, membranous, woolly externally, with 5 sharply pointed teeth. Flowers moderately to thinly white-woolly externally, lemon yellow with greenish midribs and yellowish green bases, 2-3 mm long. Flowers May to August, at least during wet years.

**Fruits:** Achenes 3-angled, light brown, sparsely woolly, 2.5-3 mm long.

**Identification Tips:** This species is not in Hitchcock & Cronquist (1973). Distinguished by its growth habit (low, matted, tufted perennial), and woolly flowers and achenes.

**Range:** Endemic to a very narrow range in southcentral WA.

**Habitat/Ecology:** The solitary population occurs between 340-400 m (1120-1300 ft) on flat to gently sloping microsites near the top of a steep, north-facing basalt ridge overlooking the Columbia River. Overall vegetation cover is low; associated species include spiny hopsage (*Grayia spinosa*), purple sage (*Salvia dorrii*), threadleaf scorpionweed (*Phacelia linearis*), winged cryptantha (*Cryptantha pterocarya*), small evening primrose (*Camissonia minor*), and cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*). It is restricted to the exposed top of a particular basalt flow, which suggests a dependent relationship with the unique chemical composition of that flow. The relatively high water-holding capacity of the substrate has also been suggested as an important factor. The species is not fire adapted; a recent fire killed about 15% of the population.

**Comments:** The species is currently protected with the Hanford Reach National Monument; however, a recent viability analysis indicates that the population is in a gradual decline. Threats include fire and trampling or crushing from livestock grazing, off-road vehicles, and other recreational uses.

**References:** Flora of North America 1993+, vol. 5; Reveal et al. 1995.



photo by Joe Arnett



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