

# *Triphysaria versicolor* ssp. *versicolor*

**English name** bearded owl-clover

**Scientific name** *Triphysaria versicolor* ssp. *versicolor*

**Family** Scrophulariaceae (Figwort)

**Other scientific names** *Orthocarpus faucibarbatu* ssp. *albidus*

## **Risk status**

BC: imperilled (S2); red-listed

Canada: threatened (N2); COSEWIC: endangered

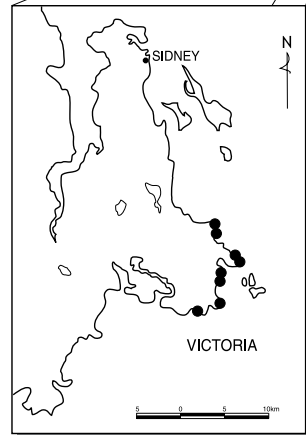
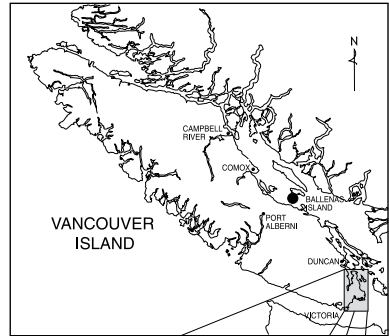
Global: secure (G5T5)

Elsewhere: California and Oregon – reported (SR)

## **Range/Known distribution**

Bearded owl-clover occurs from northern California (Monterey County) to southern Oregon (Lane County), and disjunctly to southeastern Vancouver Island. Populations of bearded owl-clover in British Columbia are at the northern extent of its geographic range in North America. The subspecies *versicolor* is the only subspecies of *Triphysaria* found in British Columbia where it is limited to headland habitats near the ocean. It occurs along about 22 km of coastline in and near Victoria from Harling Point to near Glencoe Cove. Currently, there are 9 known occurrences and 5 unconfirmed historic localities in British Columbia.

Canadian populations of this species are over 400 km north of the nearest United States populations. This pattern may be the result of introduction since glaciation, or survival of populations in glacial refugia. It has also been suggested that the distribution of this species and others are a result of the discontinuity of available habitat along the Pacific Northwest coast. Other native plant species occur in southwestern British Columbia, Oregon and California, but are absent from coastal Washington state.



**Distribution of *Triphysaria versicolor* ssp. *versicolor*.**

● recently confirmed sites

## *Triphysaria versicolor* ssp. *versicolor*

### Field description

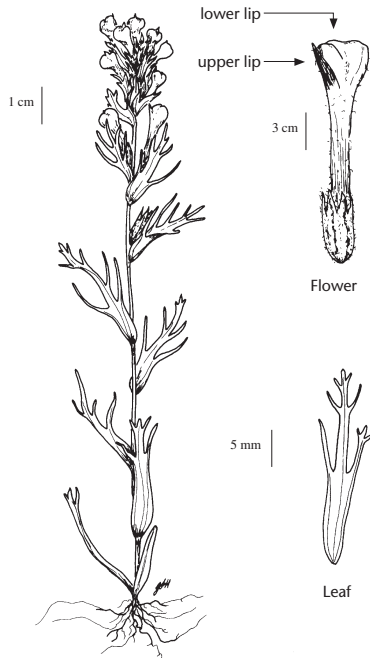
An erect annual herb from 8 to 15 (sometimes to 50) cm tall. The leaves are 2-8 cm long, minutely hairy, and divided into 5 to 9 linear lobes. They are alternately arranged, well-spaced along the minutely hairy stem, and progressively reduced to bracts (small leaves) towards the top. The flowers are crowded toward the upper part of the stem (terminal spike) and attached directly to the axis (sessile). The small leaves (bracts) in the flowerhead are 8-18 mm long and are divided into 3 to 5 lance-shaped lobes. Flowers are tubular and club-shaped, 12-22 mm long, two-lipped. They emerge white then fade to pink. The upper lip is beaklike and slightly longer than the lower lip, with stamens not extending past the petals. The lower lip is slightly swollen and deeply 3-pouched with purple-dotted margins. The sepals are tubular, 5-10 mm long, hairy, and 4-lobed. Fruit is a capsule and contains numerous seeds.

### IDENTIFICATION TIPS

In the absence of flowers this species may be confused with the green form of dwarf owl-clover (*Triphysaria pusilla*) which grows in the same habitat. The latter is a smaller plant (5-20 cm) with more highly dissected leaves, much smaller flowers and is easily distinguished by its dark reddish leaves and flowering parts.



Hans Roemer



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### **Life history**

Seeds germinate during the winter and the plant reaches full height by early spring. Flowers open by the end of April. By summer, flowering and seed production has been completed and the plants die during the summer drought in July. Bearded owl-clover reproduces only through seeds that are likely produced by cross-pollination. It is thought that members of the short-tongued bee family (Andrenidae) pollinate this species in California, but its pollinators in British Columbia are not known.

### **Habitat**

*Triphysaria versicolor* ssp. *versicolor* occurs on open grassy headlands near the ocean on rock outcrops no more than 10 m above sea level. The sites are characterized by shallow soils and flat to slightly sloping terrain. The micro-sites of this species are damp in the spring, but dry in the summer (vernally damp sites). Associated species include common camas (*Camassia quamash*) in dense stands, or sparser stands of camas with short grasses and herbs such as: early hairgrass\* (*Aira praecox*), soft brome\* (e.g. *Bromus hordeaceus*), annual fescues (*Vulpia bromoides* and *V. myuros*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*) and annual bluegrass\* (*Poa annua*). On wetter, or more sparsely-vegetated areas the species grows with Scouler's popcornflower (*Plagiobothrys scouleri*) and poverty clover (*Trifolium depauperatum*), as well as the blue-listed Macoun's meadow-foam (*Limnanthes macounii*) and the red-listed snake-root (*Sanicula arctopoides*). Other associated species include harvest brodiaea (*Brodiaea coronaria*), broad-leaved shootingstar (*Dodecatheon hendersonii*), gumweed (*Grindelia integrifolia*), sea blush (*Plectritis congesta*), dwarf owl-clover (*Triphysaria pusilla*), and white hyacinth (*Triteleia hyacinthina*). Elevations: to 10 m. The roots of *T. versicolor* form a partially parasitic relationship with other plants (possibly grasses).

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### **Why this species is at risk**

Four of the known occurrences are within city parks and are subject to potential trampling and other harmful activities. Only sites of limited occurrence extremely close to the ocean and consisting of shallow soils or rock outcrops with short turf appear to provide suitable habitat.

There is extensive public and private waterfront development in the Victoria area, within the range of *T. versicolor*, which may have destroyed populations. Other human-induced threats include habitat alteration on private property, development within city parks, and competition from introduced weeds. Pedestrian traffic in one park population may hamper the growth of this species. A second park population is threatened by nearby residential development pressures and an inadequate buffer zone.

### **What you can do to help this species**

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. Please refer to the introductory section of this manual.**

### **References**

Penny, Jenifer L., George W. Douglas, and Geraldine Allen. 1998. Status of the Bearded Owl-clover, *Triphysaria versicolor* ssp. *versicolor* (Scrophulariaceae), in Canada. *Can. Field-Nat.* 112(3):481-485.

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.