Allium bisceptrum Wats. var. ***bisceptrum***

twin-crest onion

Liliaceae (Lily Family)

Status: State Review Group 1
Rank: G4G5T3T5S1

General Description: Adapted from Hitchcock et al. (1969): This bulb-bearing perennial forb grows from 4 to 16 in. (10 to 40 cm) tall and commonly produces a cluster of short-stalked ovoid basal bulblets, with inner bulb coats that are either whitish or pinkish, and outer coats that are brownish and cellular-reticulate. There are 2 or more leaves per bulb, which are channeled, concave-convex in cross section, 1/32 to ½ in. (1 to 13 mm) broad, usually shorter than the scape, green at anthesis, and persistent at maturity. The scape is 4 to 16 in. (10 to 40 cm) tall and more or less circular in cross section. Often there are 2 or more scapes arising successively from the more vigorous bulbs. There are 2 distinct bracts per plant, which are ovate to lanceolate, acuminate, and 3- to 5-nerved. The umbel is usually many flowered, with pedicels 2 to 3 times the perianth length, which do not become strongly flexuous. The outer pedicels deflex in fruit. The lilac or pale pink to white perianth segments are ¼ in. (7 to 10 mm) long and broadly to narrowly lanceolate, acuminate, or entire. The perianth is thin, becoming papery as fruit matures. The ovary has 6 flattened, papillose-denticulate crests with a capitate stigma. The seeds are black, and the alveoli are minutely roughened or have a minute, pimplelike elevated area in the center.

Identification Tips: *Allium bisceptrum* var. *bisceptrum* closely resembles *A. campanulatum*; however, these two species can be distinguished by their appearance at anthesis and perianth in fruit. The leaves of *A. bisceptrum* are usually green at anthesis, the perianth segments are usually papery in the fruit, and the tips of the perianth are rarely either strongly involute or with a pronounced keel. The leaves of *A. campanulatum* are commonly withering by anthesis, the perianth segments are rigid in the fruit, and the tips of the perianth are strongly involute and usually with a pronounced keel.

Phenology: The variety flowers from May to July.

Range: This species has been seen on the east face of the Cascade Mountains and the Sierra Nevada from Klamath County, Oregon, to Inyo County, California, and down the Pit River to Shasta County, California. It has also been found in the eastern desert ranges across Nevada, Idaho, and Utah. *A. bisceptrum* is disjunct from central Idaho to northern Idaho and in eastern Washington. This taxon has also been seen in Franklin County, Washington.

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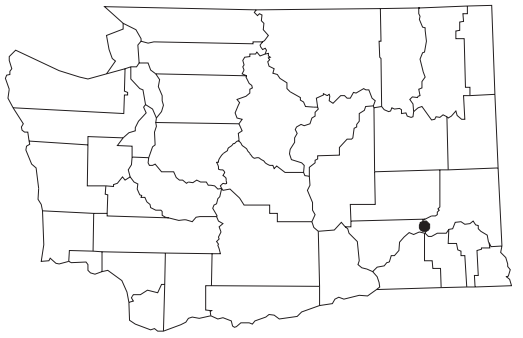
Known distribution of *Allium bisceptrum v. bisceptrum* in Washington



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

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Photo by Gary A. Monroe


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Habitat: This taxon occurs in meadows and aspen groves and grows less frequently on open slopes. In Washington, this taxon has been found at an elevation of 850 ft (259 m). This generally high-elevation plant is found in other regions from 6562 to 9514 ft (2000 to 2900 m). Associated species in Washington include sagebrush (*Artemisia* sp.), clematis (*Clematis* sp.), rose (*Rosa* sp.), brome (*Bromus* sp.), chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*), poison ivy, oak, and sumac (*Toxicodendron* spp.), thistle (*Cirsium* sp.), and sedge (*Carex* sp).

Ecology: This plant prefers the damp shade of aspen groves or open meadows in the pinyon-juniper and subalpine zones. In Washington, the one known population was found on bench above a river in a highly disturbed shrub steppe.

State Status Comments: Only one small population has been found in the state. The Washington Natural Heritage Program needs more information before assigning an accurate status.

Inventory Needs: Franklin County should be systematically surveyed for additional occurrences and updated information about these populations should be collected. The one documented occurrence should be re-visited and its identification should be confirmed.

Threats and Management Concerns: Serious threats include competition from non-natives, trampling, and grazing.

References:

Anderson, M.K. Aspen Onion. Plant Guide. Natural Resources Conservation Guide. United States Department of Agriculture. August 14, 2003.

Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, J.W. Thompson. 1969. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest* Part 1: *Vascular Cryptogams, Gymnosperms, and Monocotyledons.* University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA. 914 pp.

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