

***Minuartia nuttallii* (Pax) Briq. var. *fragilis* (Maguire & A.H. Holmgren) Rabeler & R.L. Hartm.**

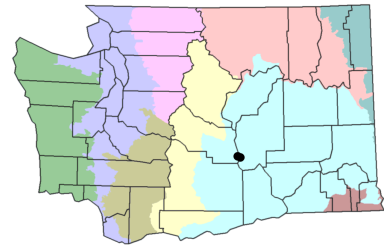
synonym: *Arenaria nuttallii* Pax var. *fragilis* (Maguire & A.H. Holmgren) C.L. Hitchc.

Nuttall's sandwort

Caryophyllaceae - pink family

status: State Threatened, BLM sensitive

rank: G5T4 / S1



General Description: Taprooted, much-branched perennial with trailing stems, forming mats 2-30 cm broad, yellowish green, and densely glandular-hairy. Flowering branches ascending to erect, 3-10 cm tall, very brittle, shattering readily at the nodes. Leaves (3) 5-10 mm long, 0.25-1 mm wide, usually overlapping, 3-nerved, needlelike with a spiny tip, prominently recurved, and more or less rigid and evenly spaced.

Floral Characteristics: Flowers (2-5) 7 to many in compact, spreading cymes; pedicels stout, 5-20 mm long. Sepals (3.5) 4-6 mm long, linear-lanceolate to lanceolate-ovate, spiny at the tip, with 1-3 (rarely 5) ribs. Petals shorter to longer than the calyx.

Fruits: Ovoid capsules, shorter than the sepals. Seeds reddish brown to dark brown, about 1.5 mm long, plump, with thick margins. Identifiable May to August.

Identification Tips: This taxon is closest in appearance to *M. obtusiloba*, which has rounded leaf tips and flowering stems that are not brittle. *M. nuttallii* ssp. *nuttallii* is a greener plant (not yellowish), and its leaf blades and sepals are pointed at the tip but not spiny. Additionally, it may have appressed, ascending, or curved leaves, while var. *fragilis* has strongly arched, spreading leaves.

Range: WA, OR, CA, and NV.

Habitat/Ecology: Open, gravelly benches, dry rocky areas, or limestone talus from open sagebrush hills to alpine slopes. In WA this taxon has been found on desert ridges of raised basalt, talus, outcrops, and in rocky to gravelly or sandy soil. Associated species include bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata*), spiny hopsage (*Grayia spinosa*), purple sage (*Salvia dorrii*), rabbitbrush (*Ericameria nauseosa*), slender buckwheat (*Eriogonum microthecum*), bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*), Carey's balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza careyana*), and bigseed biscuitroot (*Lomatium macrocarpum*). Elevations in WA: 160-720 m (520-2350 ft).

Comments: Off-road vehicles are the primary threat to this species.

References: Hickman 1993.

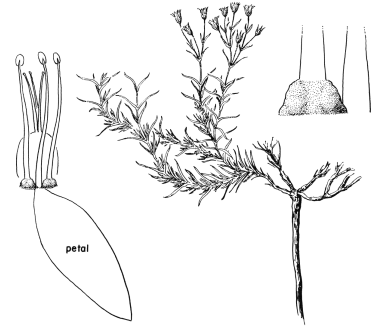


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