

Spalding's Catchfly



Silene spaldingii

Identification

Spalding's catchfly is an herbaceous, perennial plant and member of the carnation family. Each plant has one to several stems that are 8-24 in/20-61 cm tall. Each stem typically has 4-7 pairs of simple, opposite leaves with swollen nodes where the leaves attach to the stem. Spalding's catchfly has a 3 ft/1 m long taproot. Three to 20 (sometimes over 100) flowers are arranged in a branched inflorescence at the top of the plant. The majority of each small, five-petaled cream-colored flower is inside a green calyx, or leaf-like tube. Each fertilized flower becomes a cup-like fruit capsule with up to 150 seeds. A plant may have both flowers and mature fruit capsules at the same time. The species is listed as Threatened in the United States.



Photo credit: [Scott Mincemoyer, Montana Natural Heritage Program](#)/Flickr

Observation Tips

Spalding's catchfly is endemic to the Palouse region of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho with some plants also found in western Montana and southern British Columbia. The plants typically bloom from mid-July through August with fruits maturing from August into September.

Interesting Fact

Spalding's catchfly gets its name from abundant, dense sticky hairs on the stems and leaves that frequently trap dust and insects.

Ideal Habitat

Spalding's catchfly lives predominantly in open, mesic bunchgrass grasslands and sagebrush-steppe, and occasionally in open pine woodlands. The bunchgrass grasslands are dominated by Idaho fescue or rough fescue with bluebunch wheatgrass. Spalding's catchfly is usually found in deep, productive loess soils (silt, silt loam or loam soil texture) in swales on flats or north-facing slopes where soil moisture is relatively higher.



Range Map provided by US Department of Ag, PLANTS Database

Management Activities that Benefit Species – Best Management Practices (BMPs)

Since many of the Spalding's catchfly populations occur on private land, landowners have an important role to play in the survival of the species. Maintain intact native plant communities as that will benefit Spalding's catchfly. Where habitat is degraded, restoration actions should be taken. Management should focus on sustainable livestock grazing through rotational grazing and ensuring wildlife grazing pressure is understood and accounted for in planning and management. Weed management should be an integrated approach so that herbicide use does not negatively impact native species. Prescribed burning may be helpful and should be done in collaboration with public land managers who monitor and manage Spalding's catchfly.

Management Activities to Avoid

Avoid converting or fragmenting intact prairie and sage-steppe. Avoid introducing invasive weeds.

Other Species that Benefit from Similar Habitat Management

Management for Spalding's catchfly benefits other Palouse prairie species including the giant Palouse earthworm, broadfruit mariposa lily, and Palouse goldenweed.

Other Resources

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2007. [Recovery Plan for *Silene spaldingii*](#) (Spalding's Catchfly). U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Portland, Oregon. xiii + 187 pages.

NatureServe. 2021. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. [Spalding's Champion](#)

US Department of Agriculture, NRCS. 2020. The PLANTS Database. National Plant Data Team, Greensboro, NC 27401-4901, USA. [*Silene spaldingii*](#)