

Narrow-leaf Bittercress

Cardamine impatiens L.

Alternate Common Name: Bushy Rock-cress

- **biennial herbaceous plant**; with erect form; **6"-31" tall**; **shiny green** in color
- **stem leaves alternate**; **numerous (6-20)**; thin and pliable; up to 4" long, or longer
- **lower and middle stem leaves have 6-9 pairs of long-pointed, somewhat lobed leaflets**
- **small ears of the leaf bases remain on the mainstem when the principal leaves are removed**
- **flower petals may be absent**; if present, **4, white, tiny** (1/10" long or less); in June
- **fruit is a slender, upward-growing, string bean-like silique 6/10" to 3/4" long**;

Narrow-leaf Bittercress is similar to the native Pennsylvania Bitter-cress (*Cardamine pensylvanica* Muhl.) in that it has lobed or toothed leaflets on a tall, erect mainstem; tiny, white flowers; and the basal leaves may be few or absent by the time it flowers. **Narrow-leaf Bittercress is differentiated by the downward-pointing "ears" at the base of the leafstalks. When a leaf is removed, the ears remain on the mainstalk.** As is typical of other species of Bittercress, the fruits open from the base with two deciduous strips coiling up to reveal the seeds attached to a central membrane. The young seedling leaves do not resemble mature leaves (see photo of seedlings in pot). The first year, the plant lacks the tall, flowering stalks.

Narrow-leaf Bittercress grows vigorously in disturbed areas, covering the ground in dense (but easy-to-pull up) patches. The plant is currently uncommon, but increasing, in New England.



Text and photos by: Charlotte Pyle, October 2002
Helpful review provided by: Lillian Willis