

Spalding Champion

Silene Spaldingii

Fact Sheet

April 2011

Natural Resources Conservation Service

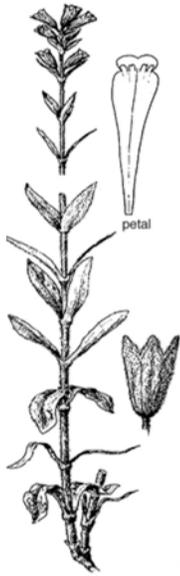


Illustration by Jeanne R. Janish, from
"Vascular Plants of the Pacific
Northwest"

Spalding's Champion

Official Status: Threatened - Montana.

Threatened species are species that are likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of their range.

Listed:

66 Federal Register 51597, October 2001.

Historical status:

Spalding's champion was once found throughout the Palouse prairie and canyon grasslands of the Pacific Northwest bunchgrass habitat type in southeastern Washington, northwestern Montana, adjacent portions of Idaho and Oregon, and British Columbia.

Present Status:

There are currently 99 known populations of Spalding's champion in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia, Canada. Of the known populations, 66 have fewer than 100 individuals each, 23 have 100 or more individual each, and the 10 largest populations are each made up of more than 500 plants. In Montana, populations

have been located in the intermountain valleys of Flathead, Lake, Lincoln, and Sanders Counties.

Habitat:

This plant is primarily found in mesic (not extremely wet, nor extremely dry) Pacific bunchgrass prairie dominated by native perennial grasses such as Idaho and rough fescue. Other associated plant species include bluebunch wheatgrass, prairie junegrass, snowberry, Nootka rose, yarrow, prairie smoke, sticky geranium, and arrowleaf balsamroot. This vegetation type occurs on the rolling Palouse prairie and in steep, dissected canyon grasslands. The elevational range is between 1,500 and 5,100 feet.

Life History:

Silene spaldingii is a long-lived, perennial forb. Reproduction is by seed only; the plant has no rhizomes, stolons, or other means of vegetative reproduction. Flowering occurs during July and early August.



State Distribution: Upper Flathead River drainage and Tobacco Valley—Flathead, Lake, Lincoln, Sanders counties, Montana

Aid to Identification:

Spalding's champion is a perennial forb with a simple or branched rootcrown. Stems are 8-24" tall with 4-7 pairs of opposite, sessile leaves that are about 2-3" long below and gradually reduced in size upward.



The nodes (points of leaf attachment to the stem) are somewhat swollen, as is characteristic of the carnation, or pink, family. The leaves and stems are covered with long, sticky hairs. The sticky, tubular calyx is about 1-5/8" long and has 10 nerves on its surface. The corolla has 5 separate, white petals, each composed of a narrow claw that is expanded into a broadened blade above. Only the entire or shallowly-lobed blade with 4 tiny wings at the base protrudes beyond the mouth of the calyx.

Reasons for Decline:

Spalding's campion is threatened by habitat destruction and fragmentation resulting from agricultural and urban development, grazing and trampling by livestock and native herbivores, herbicide treatment and drift, and competition from non-native plants. Over 98 percent of the Palouse prairie habitat has been impacted by agricultural conversion, grazing, weed invasion, altered fire regimes and urbanization. Canyon grasslands habitat has been primarily degraded by weed invasion and grazing practices.

Recommendations:

Contact an NRCS biologist prior to implementing any activities which could impact *Silene spaldingii* habitat.

Comments:

Certain grazing practices and prescribed fire may benefit Spalding's campion by enhancing seedling establishment through removal of excessive litter. Avoidance of grazing during the flowering period or, preferably, during the *Silene spaldingii* growing season, will reduce threats to this species.

References:

Listed on the following Web site:
<http://nhp.nris.state.mt.us/plants>.

"The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD)."

