

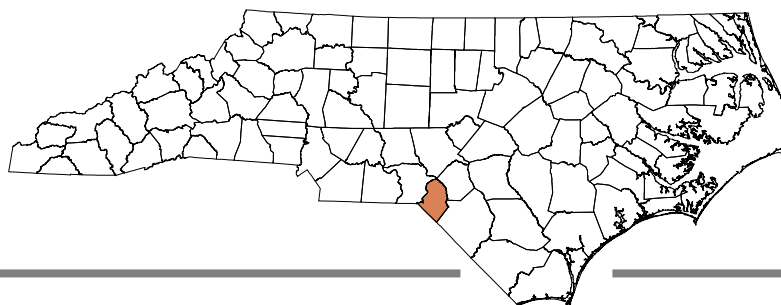
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# Canby's dropwort

*Oxypolis canbyi*

(Cowbane)

Endangered (February 25, 1986)



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**Description:** Canby's dropwort is a herbaceous perennial with tuberous roots and pale, fleshy rhizomes. When crushed the plant gives off a dill-like fragrance. The stems are erect and stand up to 39 inches (1.2 m) tall and may be purplish at the base. The leaves are like quills. By flowering time, the lower leaves are absent. The flowers are small and white, with five petals, and grow in flat-topped clusters (umbels). The sepals are pale green, sometimes tinged with red.

**Management Recommendations:** The population in Scotland County is owned in part by The Nature Conservancy. Monitoring is needed to determine whether the population is stable or changing, whether reproduction is vegetative or sexual through seeds, and if fire regimes are an essential part of the reproductive cycle.

Sources: Jackson et al. 1992, Radford et al. 1964, USFWS 1992a.

**Habitat:** Moist areas in the coastal plain and sandhills such as Carolina bays, wet meadows, wet pineland savannas, ditches, sloughs, and edges of cypress/pine ponds. Best occurrences are in open bays and ponds with minimal cover that are wet for most of the year. It typically occurs on soils that are deep, acidic, with medium to high organic content and a high water table.

**Life History:** Flowering occurs May-early August. The fruit is flattened and broadly oblong, almost saucer-shaped, 0.2 to 0.3 inch (4-7 mm) long, with prominent lateral wings. Hogfennel (*O. filiformis*) is similar, but does not have large wings on the fruit.

**Distribution:** Known from one site in Scotland County in North Carolina. Present range is Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia; historic in Delaware.

**Threats:** The most critical threat is the direct loss or alteration of the species' wetland habitat. Ditching, drainage, and subsequent bulldozing of lowland areas for agriculture and pine plantations alters the ground-water table. This enables succession to proceed leading to increased competition from other herbaceous species.

