



Narrow-Leaf Gentian



NJ Natural Heritage
Program Data: August
2008
Current and Historically
Documented Records

Scientific Name: *Gentiana linearis*

State-listed: Endangered

Federally-listed: None

State Conservation Rank: SH

Global Conservation Rank: G4G5

Description/Identification Tips: Perennial herb 20-80 cm tall in the gentian family (Gentianaceae). Leaves opposite, linear-oblong to narrowly lanceolate, 4-9 cm long, less than 1 cm wide, narrowed to the base and with smooth outer margins. Large, showy flowers are blue-violet, sometimes white, mostly few in a terminal cluster and often in upper axils, sepals linear or narrowly oblong. Petals are fused and only narrowly open, forming a tube, with tips erect or bent inward.

Range: Labrador and ME to PA and MI, south in the mountains to WV, TN.

Best Time to See: Blooms late summer to early fall.

Habitat: Wet woods and meadows; bogs.

Management: Populations benefit from specific mowing regimes and prescribed fire. Conservation of wetland habitat.

Needs: Pollination studies and population monitoring.

Comments: The beauty of Gentian flowers has historically inspired writers and poets like Henry David Thoreau and William Cullen Bryant. The extensive loss of wetland habitat in the years since these authors admired them has contributed greatly to the current rarity of this species.

References: Newcomb 1977; Gleason and Cronquist 1991; Eastman 1995; Clemants and Gracie 2006; NatureServe 2010; USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database 2011.

— Ecological Interactions —

- * While the almost-closed, tubular flowers of Narrow-Leaf Gentian prevent entry by smaller, less efficient pollinating insects, the larger and more powerful bumblebee can pry its way inside.
- * Some bees will even perforate holes in base of the flower from the outside to access the flower's nectar, short-circuiting the conventional internal route and thus avoiding pollination. This behavior is known as "nectar robbing."

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factsheet