

UC SANTA CRUZ CAMPUS NATURAL RESERVE

SAN FRANCISCO POPCORN FLOWER



Lauren Rourk

Scientific Name: *Plagiobothrys diffusus*

Common Name: San Francisco Popcorn Flower

Global Rarity: Critically Imperiled (Questionable taxonomy)

State listing: State Endangered, Critically Imperiled, CNPS 1B.1

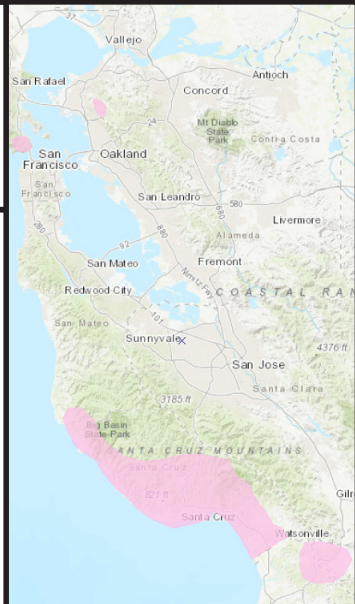
UCSC Rarity: Rare

General Description

The San Francisco Popcorn Flower is an annual herb that is endemic to Central California. The species can be found during its blooming period from March or April to June, in the counties of Alameda, Santa Cruz, San Francisco, and San Mateo.

Geographic Range

The San Francisco Popcorn Flower can be found in the Central Coast and San Francisco Bay Area regions of California.



Identification

Height: 5-25 cm tall, spreading to ascending

Color: Petals are 2-5 mm, white with yellow appendages. Nutlets are 1-1.5 mm, ovate, more or less flat, and tan to gray

Characteristics: Strigose (covered with short, stiff hairs), leaves are cauline (grow on the upper stem)

Life History

Family: Boraginaceae (or Borage)

Lifeform: annual herb

Habitat: sparsely vegetated sites in coastal prairie, valley, or foothill grasslands

Blooming Period: March/April - June

Ecology: moist places, seeps

Elevation: 30-150 meters

Conservation Status

State Endangered

The San Francisco Popcorn Flower has been listed as State Endangered in California since September of 1979.

UCSC Distribution

The San Francisco Popcorn Flower currently occurs in at least two small populations in Upper Campus coastal prairie.

Threats

Statewide

1. Development
2. Non-native plants
3. Grazing and vehicles

UCSC campus

1. Mountain biking traffic has heavily impacted the species's presence in coastal prairie on the UCSC Upper Campus.

Research Highlights and Fun Facts

The San Francisco Popcorn Flower is a moth host plant for *Ethmia plagiobothrae*, meaning it provides a site for these moths to lay their eggs and also acts as a food source for the growing caterpillar.



Ways you can help

1. If mountain biking, avoid biking in areas where annual herbs and plants grow (i.e. avoid going off-trail)
2. If you see a San Francisco Popcorn Flower, do not pick or disturb the plant as it is at a very high risk of extinction.



References and Photo Credits

California Native Plant Society, Rare Plant Program. 2021. Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California (online edition, v8-03 0.39). Retrieved from <http://www.rareplants.cnps.org> on 22 May 2021.

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Kelley, R. 2012. *Plagiobothyrus diffusus*. The Jepson Herbarium, University of California Berkeley. Retrieved from https://ucjeps.berkeley.edu/eflora/eflora_display.php?tid=38493 on 30 June 2021.

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Page 2 Bottom Left: Bain J (2020). University of Lethbridge Herbarium (LEA). Version 6.3. University of Lethbridge. Occurrence dataset <https://doi.org/10.5886/wrt547hq> Licensed under CC0 1.0 Universal. Retrieved from <https://www.gbif.org/occurrence/894983788> on 22 May 2021.

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