

Scarlet Gaura (*Gaura coccinea*)

Onagraceae (Evening Primrose)

RANGE

- Widespread, mainly central distribution in North America, from British Columbia east to Ontario and south from Louisiana across to California (USA)
- In B.C., reported in one location near Osoyoos, three locations near Kamloops, and three locations in the Kootenay Valley in eastern B.C.

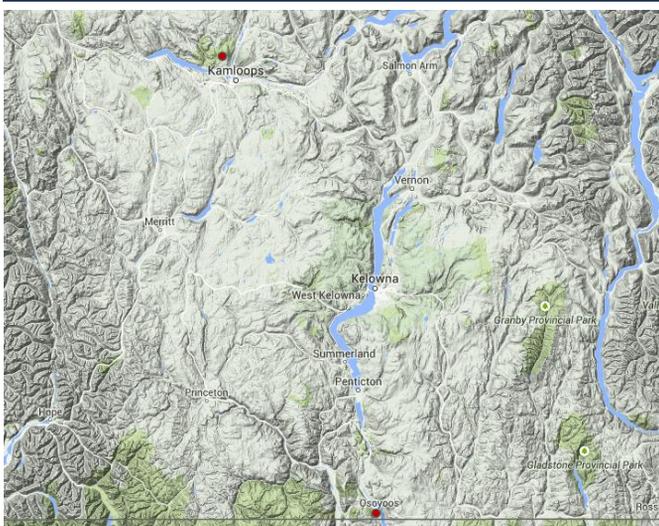


Figure 1 Thompson Okanagan Region distribution of *Gaura coccinea* (BC CDC 2014)

HABITAT

- Loamy or silty soils in open shrub-steppe and grasslands in the Bunchgrass and Ponderosa Pine Biogeoclimatic Zones
- Associates include big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), prairie sagewort (*A. frigida*), pussytoes (*Antennaria* spp.), Thompson's paintbrush (*Castilleja thompsonii*), junegrass (*Koeleria macrantha*) and bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*)



Figure 2 Shrub-steppe grassland habitat near Kamloops, B.C.



Figure 3 Flowering plant in grassy trailside habitat near Medicine Hat, Alberta

LIFE HISTORY

- Perennial species that blooms from late May into August
- Seeds are produced throughout summer and into fall, and are released as capsules dry and split open
- Does not reproduce vegetatively (i.e., from plant or root pieces) so population survival depends on the seed bank
- Seed dispersal by wind, gravity or small mammals

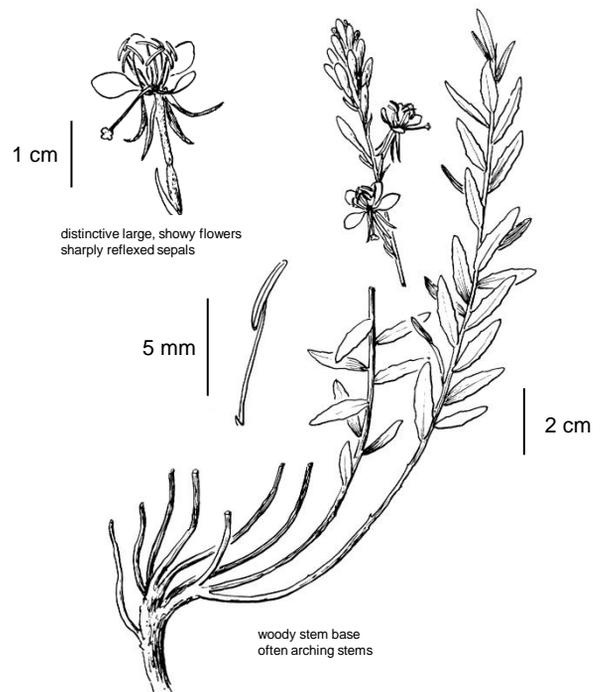


Figure 4 Illustration of *Gaura coccinea* by Jeanne R. Janish (Hitchcock et al. 1969)

Gaura coccinea (continued)

DESCRIPTION

General

- Perennial herb that grows from a long taproot
- Plants minutely hairy, usually with long, spreading hairs present along the stems
- Several simple or unbranched stems, 20 to 60 cm tall, that arch outwards or grow erect from a woody base

Leaves

- Leaves arranged alternately, 1.5 to 3 (up to 3.5) cm long, along the upper portions of the stem
- Leaves lance-shaped, unstalked, wavy-toothed or entire, growing smaller upwards along the stem

Flowers

- Numerous flowers in terminal spikes 5 to 20 cm long
- Four petals, 3 to 8 mm long, spoon-shaped with oval to diamond-shaped blades and narrow bases, white in colour (turning pink to pale red with age)
- Sepals 5 to 10 mm long, sharply reflexed back
- Stamens (8) and styles extend well out from centre of flowers, stigmas composed of 4 small lobes

Fruits

- Short-stalked fruits, woody and nut-like, 4 to 9 mm long, somewhat diamond-shaped and 4-angled
- Each fruit contains 1 to 4 seeds



Figure 5 Plant showing terminal clusters of 4-petaled, pink flowers

IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- Characterized by a woody stem base, often arching stems, distinctive flowers (large, showy, pink or pale red) and sharply reflexed sepals
- Similar to fireweed (*Epilobium angustifolium*), which occurs in different habitats and has darker-coloured flowers, sepals not reflexed, no woody base on stem, stigmas composed of longer narrow segments, and long, narrow capsules, containing numerous seeds with tufts of hair at the ends



Figure 6 Close-up of (a) flower showing spoon-shaped petals, extended stamens and lobed stigma, and (b) simple, arching stem

GENERAL THREATS AND GUIDANCE

- **Avoid development in areas with known occurrences of *Gaura coccinea* through project relocation or redesign**
- Protect open shrub-steppe and grassland habitats from disturbance and development (including livestock grazing) and consider restoration (including invasive plant removal) following professional advice
- Follow provincial methods for when and how to conduct plant species at risk surveys
- Follow provincial policy and guidance on how to avoid, minimize, restore and offset impacts to plant species at risk and their habitats
- Report any sightings to the B.C. Conservation Data Centre (cdccdata@gov.bc.ca) and FLNR Ecosystems Section (josie.symonds@gov.bc.ca)

REFERENCES

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