

DACF Home → Bureaus & Programs → Maine Natural Areas Program → Communities, Plants, and Animals → Rare Plants → Huperzia selago

About MNAP
Focus Areas
Communities, Plants and Animals
Natural Communities and Ecosystems
Rare Plants
Invasive Plants
Ecological Inventory and Monitoring
Rare Animals
State and Global Rarity Ranks
Survey Forms
Maps, Data, and Technical Assistance
Ecological Reserves

Maine Natural Areas Program

Huperzia selago (L.) Bernh. ex Mart. & Schrank

Northern Firmoss

- State Rank: S2
- Global Rank: G5
- State Status: Threatened

Habitat: Damp or mossy rocks, barrens, cold woods

Range: Circumboreal; Labrador and Greenland to Alaska, south to the mountains of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and northern New York, on the summits of the higher Alleghenies to North Carolina, and to Michigan and Washington. Also in Europe and Asia.



Aids to Identification: Northern firmoss is similar in appearance to some other, more common, firmosses. Its dense, leafy stems grow 5-10 cm high, in close tufts, giving the clumps a flat-topped appearance. The scale-like leaves bear the sporangia (spore-producing bodies) in their axils, so that the yellowish spikes characteristic of most clubmosses are lacking. *Huperzia selago* is very similar to *H. appressa* and the two species are very difficult to separate. *H. appressa* has smaller, more upward oriented leaves and determinate stems (i.e., the entire stem dies and turns yellow). *H. selago* has larger, more spreading or recurved leaves and indeterminate stems.



Ecological characteristics: *Huperzia selago* is not an alpine species, contrary to previous thought. Popular sites for *H. selago* in New England include disturbed sites near water, such as shores, ditches, and coniferous forests. Hybrids with *H. appalachiana* are frequent above treeline on New England's higher alpine summits. But *H. selago* is not found above treeline.

Phenology: Sporates July - September.

Family: Huperziaceae (formerly in Lycopodiaceae)

Synonyms: *Lycopodium selago* L.; *Lycopodium selago* L. var. *patens* (Beauv.) Desv.; *Plananthus selago* (L.) Beauv.; *Urostachys selago* (L.) Herter.

Known Distribution in Maine: This rare plant has been documented from a total of 9 town(s) in the

following county(ies): Franklin, Kennebec, Oxford, Piscataquis, Somerset, Washington.





Reason(s) for rarity: At southern limit of its range.

Conservation considerations: Populations could be threatened by heavy recreational (hiking) use.



Copyright © 2013
All rights reserved.

- [Maine.gov](#)
- [Site Policies](#)
- [Accessibility](#)
- [Comments/Questions](#)
- [Jobs @ DACE](#)
- [Grants & Loans](#)
- [Educational Resources](#)

-  [Facebook](#)
-  [Twitter](#)
-  [YouTube](#)
-  [Email/SMS Updates](#)
- [Event & Meeting Calendar](#)
- [See more social media...](#)

- [Maine State Park Passes](#)
- [Volunteer](#)
- [Specialty License Plates](#)
- [Outdoor Heritage Fund](#)
- [Lottery Ticket](#)
- [Donations](#)
- [See more choices...](#)

Department of Agriculture,
Conservation and Forestry
22 State House Station
18 Elkins Lane
Augusta, ME 04333
More [Locations](#)

Phone: (207) 287-3200
Fax: (207) 287-2400
TTY: Maine Relay 711
DACE@Maine.gov