

# ***Comastoma tenellum*** (Rottb.) Toyok.

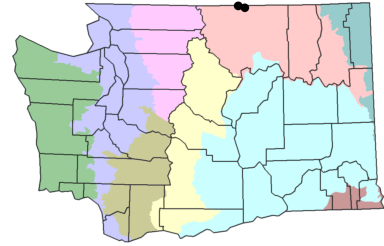
synonym: *Gentiana tenella* Rottb.

slender gentian

Gentianaceae - gentian family

status: State Sensitive, BLM sensitive, USFS sensitive

rank: G4G5T4 / S1



**General Description:** Hairless annual 4-15 cm tall, with slender, 4-angled stems, simple to branched at the base. Basal leaves usually several, oblanceolate, 3-10 mm long. Stem leaves few, opposite, oblanceolate, 5-15 mm long.

**Floral Characteristics:** Flowers 8-15 mm long, usually 4-parted (sometimes 5-parted), single and terminal on long naked peduncles, or few to many arising from the lower leaves on elongated stalks up to 10 cm long. Calyx at least half the length of the corolla, deeply lobed (nearly distinct), the 2 outer lobes broader and shorter than the inner 2. Corolla white to bluish purple, tubular. The inside surface of each lobe is fringed with two basal scales; the tube is not pleated where the lobes meet. Flowers July to August.

**Fruits:** Many-seeded capsules slightly longer than the corolla.

**Identification Tips:** *Gentiana douglasiana* is a related annual that is also rare in WA. However, it has 5-parted flowers, a clearly tubular calyx with lobes about half the length of the tube, corolla tubes that are pleated internally where the lobes meet, and corolla lobes that are not internally fringed at the base. The flowering period of *Comastoma tenellum* (July to August) is also shorter than that of *Gentiana douglasiana* (July to September). *Gentiana glauca* is distinguished by its rhizomatous, perennial habit, clearly tubular calyx, and 5-parted, sessile flowers that are internally pleated where the lobes meet.

**Range:** Mountain ranges of Eurasia, Greenland, AK, parts of Canada, MT, south to NM and west to CA, OR, and WA.

**Habitat/Ecology:** Disturbed sites in subalpine to alpine meadows at 2070 to 2320 m (6800-7600 ft). It grows with diamondleaf willow (*Salix planifolia*), dwarf bilberry (*Vaccinium caespitosum*), alpine timothy (*Phleum alpinum*), sedges (*Carex* spp.), shrubby cinquefoil (*Dasiphora fruticosa*\*), timber oatgrass (*Danthonia intermedia*), and mosses. In WA it co-occurs with *Gentiana glauca* in moist, hummocky areas, but *C. tenellum* is never found directly on hummocks.

**Comments:** Threats include sheep and cattle grazing, trampling by hikers, and increases in exotic species. *C. tenellum* is also rare in AK, AZ, ID, Ontario, Quebec, and WY.

**References:** Douglas et al. 1998-2002, vol. 3; Jepson Flora Project 2010.



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