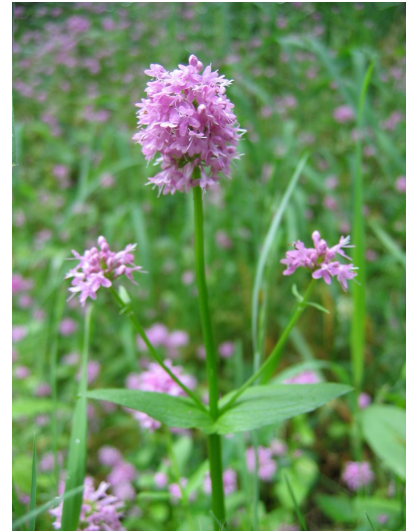


PLECTRITIS CONGESTA FOUND ON ROADSIDE IN THURSTON COUNTY

A small population of *Plectritis congesta* was recently discovered along a stretch of roadside close to the Nature Conservancy site in Littlerock, WA – Shotwell’s Landing. Formerly known as Rainbow Valley, Shotwell’s is the site of a native propagation nursery and seed production facility supported by The Nature Conservancy and a number of prairie conservation partners including Ft. Lewis, USFWS, WDFW, and NRCS.

“*Plectritis* is a rare find in the Puget Sound,” says Peter Dunwiddie of The Nature Conservancy. “We think that it may once have been more common in the prairies, but solid records of it are few and imprecise. Today, it only occurs in the South Sound in a handful of sites, although it is common in coastal areas such as the San Juans. With this discovery so close to the Mima prairies, we now know that this species almost certainly was once more widespread in this habitat, and is an appropriate choice to consider for establishment here in restoration efforts.”



Plectritis congesta is an annual plant in the same family as Valerian (Valerianaceae). It grows up to 60 cm tall and can have white or purple umbels. Also known as sea blush, *Plectritis* lives in vernal moist meadows and open rocky slopes and bluffs from the Straits of Georgia through Puget Sound and south to California.

“I’m hopeful that locating this population of *Plectritis* in Thurston County will help with ongoing conservation efforts throughout the region.” says Jim Lynch, the biologist who discovered the *Plectritis* population.

Plectritis is one of the host plants for larvae of the rare Taylor’s checkerspot butterfly, one of the species conservationists are working hard to maintain or restore on prairies. Establishing populations of this host plant could provide an important food source for this endangered butterfly. Finding the new population is hopeful news, not just for conservationists, but for fans of prairie wildflowers everywhere.