



Tall Bugbane in fall

#### Geographical Distribution

Tall Bugbane has a limited and sporadic distribution, occurring from southwestern Oregon and western Washington north to the Chilliwack River Valley in British Columbia. In the Chilliwack River Valley, small populations have been documented as far west as the southern end of Vedder Mountain and as far east as Chipmunk Creek.

**To contribute your observations:** Fill out a CDC Rare Plant Observation Form at <http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/cdc/contribute.htm> or Phone Toll free through Enquiry BC 1-800-633-7867 and ask for the CDC at (250) 356-0928

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# Tall Bugbane

ENDANGERED

Tall Bugbane with blooms and seed pods

***Actaea elata* (formerly *Cimicifuga elata*)**

#### Look For:

- Maple-like leaves
- White bottlebrush-like flower on spreading stalks
- Tiny pod-like seed capsules (papery when mature)



Tall Bugbane Leaves

#### Habitat

Tall bugbane is typically found on moist slopes in mature (70-250 yr.) and old-growth forests (>250 yr.), but it can also occasionally be found in younger forests, clear cuts and on road edges. All verified sightings of Tall Bugbane in BC are from below 800 m. elevation on gently sloping bench lands. Flowering plants are often associated with openings in the forest where light penetrates to the ground. In the Chilliwack Forest District, they are found in forests dominated by western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*), western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) and/or Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). Bigleaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*) is often found in association with these moist forest types. In forested habitat, the shrub layer is never dense. Three of the shrubs that occur most frequently near Tall Bugbane include Devil's club (*Oplopanax horridum*), Oregon grape (*Mahonia nervosa*) and salmonberry (*Rubus parviflorus*). Generally, the understory has a moderately developed herbaceous cover characterised by sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*), foam flower (*Tiarella trifoliata*) and vanilla leaf (*Achlys triphylla*). Tall bugbane is often located along creeks, streams, and seepage slopes generally characterised by the presence of Devil's Club. Tall Bugbane tends to grow in the drier portions of these moist sites. Mountain Beaver (*Aplodontia rufa rufa*) and Devil's Club are frequently found nearby.



Baneberry with white fruit

#### Description

- **Leaves:** The maple-like leaves of Tall Bugbane have very fine hairs on the upper and lower surfaces, especially prominent on the lower surface veins. The leaves are usually arranged in clusters of three with 9-17 leaflets. The leaflets have 5-7 lobes with coarsely toothed margins. On young plants the leaves resemble Baneberry (*Actaea rubra*). On mature plants, the large compound leaves can be confused with those of Thimbleberry (*Rubus parviflorus*). In fall, the leaves turn brown to black and persist on upright stalks into winter.
- **Stems:** The erect stems are covered with fine downy hairs. Mature plant stems often persist into the winter.
- **Flowers:** Tall bugbane flowers from mid June to early August. The flowers consist of 50-900 tiny white flowers along an upright to drooping spike. Because the flowers lack petals, the inflorescence actually consists of hundreds of tiny, tufted, white stamens that resemble a bottlebrush.
- **Seed Capsules:** Each flower produces capsules which hold 6-12 seeds. The mature capsules are small, papery and look like tiny ribbed pea-pods measuring 3-4mm in length. In winter, old flower stalks and remnant seed capsules may still be visible. The seed pods of Tall Bugbane cannot be confused with its close relative Baneberry, which has white or red berries instead of papery capsules.