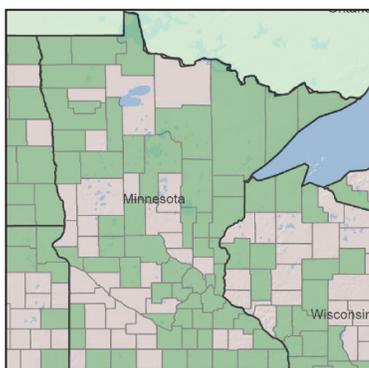


# Aniseroot (*Osmorhiza longistylis*)

## Family: Carrot (*Apiaceae*)

**DESCRIPTION:** A native herbaceous perennial, aniseroot is also known as long-styled sweet cicely. Those names describe its anise- or licorice-scented root, and its flowers with long styles that extend beyond the petals. Found in open, sunny or partly shaded mesic to moist woodlands, the plant blooms in May and June, producing clusters of small, shallow white flowers arranged in umbels, a pattern resembling the spokes of an umbrella.

**USES:** Stems and roots' strong anise fragrance generally deters herbivores from browsing the plant. The small white flowers attract native bees including mining bees (*Andrena*), masked bees (*Hylaeus*), sweat bees (Halictidae family), small carpenter bees (*Ceratina*), and cellophane bees (*Colletes*). Syrphid flies (Syrphidae family) and predatory wasps such as mason wasps also visit the flowers.



Range Map Credit: NRCS Plants Database



**STATEWIDE WETLAND INDICATOR STATUS:** FACU

**ID:** This plant grows 2 to 3 feet tall, with a maroon stem. Its medium to dark green, single- or double-compound alternate leaves with three-lobed leaflets resemble fern fronds. Leaflets grow up to 4 inches long and 2 inches wide. Leaf stalks are shorter near the tops of the stems. The 2- to 3-inch-wide umbels are divided into a handful of umbellets; each umbellet has eight to 16 tiny white flowers. Flowers have five petals, five stamens that extend above the petals, and two styles. Seed pods are narrow, oval and covered in stiff hairs that adhere to mammals' fur, facilitating seed dispersal.

**SIMILAR SPECIES:** The compound leaves of sweet cicely (*Osmorhiza claytonii*) are very finely divided (more fern-like than aniseroot) and the flower styles do not extend past the edge of the petals.

## Planting Recommendations

Commonly found in woodlands, aniseroot thrives in wooded fragments of suburban gardens. Mammals disperse the seed, but tend not to browse on the unpalatable plant. The white flowers can brighten shady gardens; the foliage texture contrasts nicely with other native plants tolerant of partial shade, such as wild geranium,

zigzag goldenrod, Virginia waterleaf and long-beaked sedge. Collected seeds need a period of cold moist stratification for 60 days prior to spring sowing. Seed is available for sale from a limited number of native plant nurseries. For pet owners, this may not be a highly sought-after plant because the seed pods can adhere to fur.

**Developed by Heather Holm**, pollinator conservationist and [author](#) whose four published books include "Pollinators of Native Plants" and "Bees: An Identification and Native Plant Forage Guide"

### REFERENCES:

Wildflowers of Wisconsin and the Great Lakes Region; M. Black, E. Judziewicz  
[Minnesota Wildflowers](#)

