

# SAND CRESS PHOTO CHALLENGE

**BY TERRY BONACE**

**FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION GROUP**



The tiny, white, 4-petaled blossoms of Sand Cress (*Arabadopsis lyrata*) are very likely found in bare, sandy patches in your own yard. I know, I see them in mine. It is also abundant along the lake front dunes and foredunes. But measuring only 4 inches or more in height with tiny leaves and a white flower that is only a 1/4 inch across, it can be nearly invisible.

This dune native is in the mustard family with the typical four petal arrangement, making it cruciferous (the four petals forming a cross). It is a relative of our many edible and healthy cruciferous plants like radishes, arugula, rutabaga, broccoli, and cauliflower. Sand cress does not remotely resemble rutabaga or broccoli, except in the blossoms, and is too tiny to make up much of the diet for larger animals. The endangered Karner blue butterfly likes the flowers. Many other insects dine on the leaves.

The “lyrata” in the scientific name refers to the tiny leaves at the base of the plant that often disappear as the plant matures. They are rather romantically referred to as “lyre-shaped” being deeply lobed. But if you are fortunate enough to see these tiny, lobed, basal leaves, this musical instrument is not likely to come to mind immediately.



I challenge readers to look for this plant, and, if you find it, to send me a photo. It is a good activity to do during social distancing and it would make me happy to find new fans of this minute beauty. The best photos will be put on our web site at [www.berg.org](http://www.berg.org) with your name as the photographer. Send your photos to me at [tbonace@gmail.com](mailto:tbonace@gmail.com). (You can also opt out of the competition, if you just want to send your photo to verify your identification. Just let me know.)

The Environmental Restoration Group (ERG) will be glad to help you identify wildflowers and other plants. Do not hesitate to contact any of us for assistance: Terry Bonace ([tbonace@gmail.com](mailto:tbonace@gmail.com)), Candice Smith ([candicepetersonsmith@gmail.com](mailto:candicepetersonsmith@gmail.com)), or Bill Schaudt ([blschaudt2@gmail.com](mailto:blschaudt2@gmail.com)). Also please visit our website [www.bserg.org](http://www.bserg.org) for further information on native and invasive plants.

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