

Wildflowers

THE BULLETIN OF THE
BOTANICAL SOCIETY OF W. PA.

NOVEMBER

1991



NOVEMBER MEETING

Our next meeting will be held at 8 P.M., Monday, November 11 - Veteran's Day. It will be at our usual meeting place, Trinity Hall, Carlow College, 3333 Fifth Ave., Oakland.

The eminent mycologist, Emily Johnson, will present the program "Fall Edibles". Emily is nationally known for her color photography of fungi. She has 38 picture credits in the Audubon Society "Field Guide to North American Mushrooms". A set of postcards depicting Emily's photographs has also been printed. We are very proud to count Emily as a member of the Botanical Society.



SEPTEMBER 14 FIELD TRIP TO GREENE COUNTY

This was the first hike for some of our members and in spite of the terrible drought we saw quite a few wild flowers - especially right along the creek. I thought the blue lobelia flower was the most beautiful - a rich shade of indigo blue in an unusually shaped flower. The willow herb still had a few inconspicuous flowers. The purple loosestrife was nearly finished but must have had a spectacular display. There were some asters left and bur marigolds. Some tiny pools had duck weed. We also saw the shed skin of a large snake - probably a garter snake.

The most striking sight for me was a huge old split sycamore tree growing by a creek - struggling to stay alive! Some of the short branches had large healthy leaves. I hope this tree makes it and lives for many more years.

A train track runs right along the edge of this valley - making it even more interesting.

Mr. & Mrs. Haywood & Dr. Mary Joy offered us exceptional hospitality at their home after the hike. Mrs. Haywood had made gallons of homemade vegetable soup - very good! Plus homemade apple & pumpkin pie. And there was plenty for the 26 people who came on the hike. I almost forgot to mention the gallons of iced tea that we drank.

Altogether a very enjoyable occasion.

Our thanks again to the Haywood family.

- Ede Mock



RARE PLANT COMMITTEE MEETING

Rare Plant Committee meeting will be held December 6, 7, 8 at Shippensburg University, Shippensburg, Pa.

- Dr. Mary Joy Haywood



SYMPATHY

Belatedly, we extend our condolences to Mary Lou Brown upon the death of her mother.



WISSAHICKON'S MEETING PLACE BURNS

As I sit writing this, the TV picture is showing Community Presbyterian Church ablaze. This church on Woodland Ave., Ben Avon had been the meeting place of our sister society, Wissahickon Nature Club.

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PELLAEA ATROPURPUREA

Reduced in size, this silhouette of the Purple Cliffbrake is from Esther Allen's collection of pressed ferns. The specimen was from Gallia County, Ohio, and goes back to July, 1974.



MILE-A-MINUTE WEED

Several weeks ago, the Pittsburgh Press ran a front-page article on an obnoxious weed that grows as much as 6 inches a day and can reach a length of 25 feet. Alas, no botanical name was given.

We contacted Nathan L. Hartwig, Professor of Weed Science at Penn State, and got the name - POLYGONUM PERFOLIATUM - and this article from the Penna. Dept. of Agriculture, written by Wilbur L. Mountain.

Little is known about the biology and control of mile-a-minute. This is true even in Japan and Korea, where it is native and plant scientists indicate that mile-a-minute is a weed of minor significance with little or no agricultural impact. The purpose of this article is to give some information (of what is known at this writing) on the biology and control of this weed.

Mile-a-minute, an annual prickly vine native to Asia and introduced into southern York County, probably in the early 1940s, continues to extend its range in Pennsylvania. To date, the presence of this legislated noxious weed has been documented in 11 counties - York, Lancaster, Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Perry, Chester, Delaware, Berks and, most recently, Westmoreland and Bedford. Maryland and West Virginia are the only other states reporting this plant.

Typical habitats are roadsides (especially in crownvetch), edges of woods and thickets, nurseries, reforestation clear-cuts, utility right-of-ways, and damp areas such as low meadows and stream banks. In general, mile-a-minute grows in areas that have an abundance of plant litter such as leaves, duff, or brush on the soil surface. This material seems to provide a mulching effect, keeping the seeds moist, and along with winter cold, cause spring germination.

Mile-a-minute may reach 20 ft. (6m) long (Fig.1). The leaf shape is unique, appearing as a perfect triangle from 1-3 in. (2.5 - 7.5 cm) across. Sheaths at the

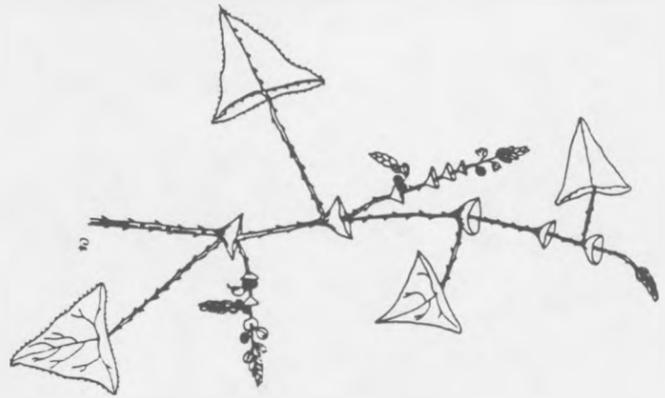


Fig. 1. Line drawing of branch apex of *P. perfoliatum*. From Hickman and Hickman (1976-77); courtesy of Barton and the authors.

nodes are saucer-shaped, completely encircling the stem (hence the name *perfoliatum*). Numerous sharp backward-curving spines are present on the stem, petiole, and main leaf veins (hence the name "tearthumb"). The outside of the fruit is fleshy, spherical, about 3/16 in (5 mm) in diameter and iridescent blue when mature. Each "berrylike" fruit contains a single black, shiny "seedlike" achene about 1/8 in (3 mm) in diameter. A population of mile-a-minute climbing over other plants and fences will appear light green compared to surrounding vegetation. In winter, the dead vines appear reddish brown.

Mile-a-minute prefers sunny locations but will survive in light shade. Mature blue "berries" appear from about August 1 till frost, and plants under stress appear to produce more seeds than vigorous, unstressed plants. Seed germination in southcentral Pennsylvania begins about April 1. In greenhouse trials, seeds would germinate only after receiving a cold/moist treatment (stratification). Germination was completed in 2-3 weeks.

Birds and rodents have been implicated in feeding on and helping disperse the seeds. Seeds also are carried downstream in rivers and streams, especially during flooding.



ANNE BAHL FINDS PERNICIOUS POLYGONUM

It didn't take Anne very long to find the Mile-a-Minute Weed, *Polygonum perfoliatum*. On October 19, she found an extensive spread of it in Delaware County, Pa. It's bad, bad stuff.