

BOTRYCHIUM SIMPLEX E. Hitchc.  
Least Grape-fern

FAMILY: Ophioglossaceae

SYNONYMS: *Botrychium simplex* E. Hitchc. var. *simplex*  
*Botrychium simplex* E. Hitchc. var. *tenebrosum* (A.A. Eat.) Clausen

HABIT: Perennial with deciduous fronds, 0.3-1.5 dm.; sporulating late May-July.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Easily mistaken for a depauperate specimen of any of the other deciduous grape-ferns in Ohio, such as *B. lanceolatum* or *B. matricariifolium*. Distinguished by the nearly entire frond with but a single terminal division.

TOTAL RANGE: Nfld. to B.C., s. to NJ, PA, OH, and IN, and in the western mountains to NM and CA.

STATE RANGE: There are post-1980 specimens from Highland and Lucas Counties. There are pre-1980 collections from Ashtabula, Erie, and Geauga Counties.

HABITAT: A variety of moist, shaded situations; weedy thickets, mesophytic woods.

HAZARDS: Soil compaction; drying of habitat by removal of vegetation.

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: Unknown.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: Collect mature specimens; care should be taken in pressing the frond so as not to overlap or hide the segments; this will aid in identification.

COMMENTS: This obscure fern is very difficult to locate due to its diminutive stature and erratic occurrence. It may well be more frequent than the few records indicate. It should be sought throughout the state. Ohio specimens have been placed into two varieties (see Synonyms). Most recent treatments of this species consider the taxon a single unit. The variants are not well understood and their true status is dubious.

SELECTED REFERENCES:

Wagner, W.H., Jr. 1960. Evergreen grapeferns and the meanings of infraspecific categories as used in North American pteridophytes. *Amer. Fern Jour.* 50: 32-45.

Wagner, W.H., Jr. 1963. Pteridophytes of the Mountain Lake area, Giles County, Virginia, including notes from Whitetop Mountain. *Castanea* 28: 113-150.



Division of Natural Areas and Preserves  
Ohio Department of Natural Resources

Created: 3/1982 Allison W. Cusick