

CYNOGLOSSUM VIRGINIANUM L. var. BOREALE (Fern.) Cooperrider
Northern Wild Comfrey

FAMILY: Boraginaceae

HABIT: Perennial herb to 8 dm.; flowering May, June; fruiting June, July.

SIMILAR SPECIES: *Cynoglossum boreale* closely resembles *C. virginianum* in habit, size, and inflorescence. It generally differs in its more slender habit, less stiff pubescence, more elongate slender pedicels, and smaller floral parts. However, the two species can be reliably distinguished only by nutlet length.

TOTAL RANGE: Que. to Ont., s. to N.S., ME, NH, n. CT, NY, IN, WI, and IA; also in B.C.

STATE RANGE: There are pre-1960 records from Ashtabula, Jefferson, and Perry counties.

HABITAT: Rich woods and thickets, often associated with hemlocks.

HAZARDS: Removal of forest canopy.

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: Unknown, probably poor.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: Mature fruiting material is needed for accurate determination; avoid over-collecting.

COMMENTS: There is great taxonomic confusion concerning this species. Johnston (1924) states that all vegetative characters of *C. boreale* can be matched with material of *C. virginianum*, but that the character of nutlet length seems to always be distinct. Some authors reduce the species outright to *C. virginianum*, but it appears deserving of varietal rank at the very least.

Roberts and Cooperrider (1982) recognize only the Ashtabula County record as true *C. boreale* and state that the other specimens fall within the range of variation of *C. virginianum*. Intensive field surveys are needed for this taxon in eastern Ohio, especially in Ashtabula, Jefferson, and Perry counties. The collection of mature fruiting material is of utmost importance for accurate identification.

SELECTED REFERENCES:

Fernald, M.L. 1905. A northern *Cynoglossum*. *Rhodora* 7: 249-250.

Johnston, I.M. 1924. Studies in the Boraginaceae - II. *Contr. Gray Herb. Harvard Univ.* 70: 3-54.

Roberts, M.L. and T.S. Cooperrider. 1982. Dicotyledons. p. 48-84. In: Cooperrider, T.S., ed., *Endangered and threatened plants of Ohio*. *Ohio Biol. Surv. Biol. Notes*, No. 16. 92 p.



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