

GENTIANA SAPONARIA L.
Soapwort Gentian

FAMILY: Gentianaceae

HABIT: Herbaceous perennial, 3-6 dm.; flowering September, October; fruiting October, November.

SIMILAR SPECIES: *Gentiana saponaria* closely resembles and sometimes hybridizes with *G. andrewsii* (see Comments). It is best distinguished from *G. andrewsii* by its narrowly oblanceolate calyx lobes and dark blue-green foliage. In *G. saponaria* the corolla plaits are narrower than the corolla lobes, whereas in *G. andrewsii* the plaits are wider than the lobes. Although most manuals mention that, in *Gentiana saponaria*, the corolla tube is slightly open at maturity, that character is not reliable.

TOTAL RANGE: s. NY to FL, w. irregularly to IL, AR, e. OK, and e. TX.

STATE RANGE (as of 2008): Post-1980 records are from Lucas County. Pre-1980 records are known from Clermont, Jackson, and Ross counties.

HABITAT: Moist or seasonally wet, slightly acidic soil in alder thickets, open woods, glades, sandy swamps, shores and roadsides.

HAZARDS: Unknown, possibly overshadowing by woody species as a result of succession.

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: Unknown. It occurs in a variety of habitats and is apparently tolerant of moderate disturbance.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: The shape of the calyx lobes and color of the foliage should be noted on living material. When making a permanent collection, a flower should be cut longitudinally and pressed in such a way that the shape and width of the calyx lobes, corolla lobes, and corolla plaits are visible. Gentian flowers are susceptible to insect infestation. Care should be taken to rid the plant of insect larvae by applying a topical poison to the flowers. Over-collecting should be avoided.

COMMENTS: Mason (1959) states that, in addition to *G. saponaria* hybridizing with *G. andrewsii*, hybrids between *G. andrewsii* and *G. puberulenta* (in Wisconsin) result in F₁ progeny that closely resemble *G. saponaria*.

This species is difficult to identify and not conspicuous in the field. Also, it blooms late in the season when few botanists visit its habitat. Thus, this species may well be under-reported. It should be sought throughout western Ohio.

SELECTED REFERENCES:

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Gleason, H.A., and A. Cronquist. 1991. Manual of vascular plants of northeastern United States and adjacent Canada. New York Botanical Garden, Bronx, New York. 910 pp.

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Pringle, J.S. 1967. Taxonomy of *Gentiana*, section *Pneumonanthe*, in eastern North America. Brittonia 19: 1-32.

Wood, C.E., Jr. and R.E. Weaver, Jr. 1982. The genera of Gentianaceae in the southeastern United States. J. Arn. Arb. 63: 441-487.



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