

IRIS VERNA L.
Dwarf Iris

FAMILY: Iridaceae

HABIT: Tufted, herbaceous perennial from a stout, knotty rhizome, flowering stalks 0.5-1.5 dm.; flowering mid to late April; fruiting May, June.

SIMILAR SPECIES: When in bloom, the species resembles *Iris cristata*. *I. cristata* is distinguished by a prominent yellow crest on the upper surface of the sepals, which is absent in *I. verna*. Vegetative or fruiting material is more difficult to identify. However, plants of *I. verna* grow in thick clumps and arise from a deeply-buried, stout rhizome, while plants of *I. cristata* seldom are notably tufted and arise from a superficial, slender rhizome. These differences often are obscured in herbarium specimens.

TOTAL RANGE: PA to KY, MS, and GA.

STATE RANGE (as of 2008): Post-1980 records are from Adams, Lawrence, and Scioto counties.

HABITAT: Oak woods and openings of ridgetops in well-drained, acidic soils.

HAZARDS: Closing of forest canopy by succession.

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: Probably good; it withstands light mowing and clearing of habitat.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: Collect mature flowering or fruiting material with underground parts. Plants should be pressed as soon as possible, since the flowers quickly wilt; care should be taken to press flowers to show upper surface of sepals.

COMMENTS: This is a conspicuous and beautiful species when in flower; it could hardly be overlooked. Non-flowering plants can be difficult to locate, however. The blooming period is rather brief and very early. Fieldwork in the proper season should uncover additional populations in southern Ohio.

SELECTED REFERENCES:

Braun, E.L. 1967. The Monocotyledoneae [of Ohio]: Cat-tails to orchids. The Ohio State Univ. Press, Columbus OH. 464 pp.

Edwards, M.E. 1969. *Iris verna*: lectotype and variety description. *Rhodora* 71: 212-214.

Fernald, M.L. 1947. Two eastern species of *Iris*. *Rhodora* 49: 210-216.



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