

LITHOSPERMUM CAROLINIENSE (Walter) MacMillan
Plains Puccoon

FAMILY: Boraginaceae

SYNONYM: *Lithospermum croceum* Fernald.

HABIT: Herbaceous perennial from a deep taproot, 1.5-6 dm.; flowering late May-July; fruiting July, August.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Occasionally confused with the widespread *L. canescens*, from which it may be separated by the following characters: *L. croceum*--calyx lobes to 15 mm., pubescence harsh, hairs with pustular bases; *L. canescens*--calyx lobes to 8 mm.; pubescence soft, hairs with slender bases. The two species sometimes grow in the same habitat.

TOTAL RANGE: SW. Ont. and n. OH to MN and WY, s. to IL, NE, and OK, and from se. VA to FL and TX.

STATE RANGE (as of 2008): There are post-1980 records from Fulton, Lucas and Wood counties. There are pre-1980 records from 2 other counties: Ashtabula and Lake.

HABITAT: In open sun in well-drained, sandy situations; beach ridges, barrens, fields, roadsides.

HAZARDS: Mechanical disturbance of sandy soil; soil compaction; overgrowth by woody species through succession; digging by wildflower gardeners or herbalists (see Comments).

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: Very good, providing the taproot is undisturbed.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: Collect mature specimens, but leave taproot intact.

COMMENTS: When in bloom this species is one of Ohio's most conspicuous wildflowers. It is unlikely to be overlooked or misidentified. Therefore, its state range probably is known with some accuracy.

A purple dye may be derived from the taproot of this and other species of puccoons. The species occasionally is dug by herbalists seeking natural dyes.

Johnston (1952) treated *Lithospermum croceum* as the Great Plains-Great Lakes component of *L. caroliniense*, a wide-ranging species of the southeastern United States. Johnston subsumed *L. croceum* into a broad concept of *L. caroliniense* without any taxonomic rank. This concept is used by most manuals today.

SELECTED REFERENCES:

Fernald, M.L. 1935. Critical plants of Ontario and Michigan. *Rhodora* 37: 329-331.

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.

Johnston, I.M. 1952. Studies in the Boraginaceae, XXII. A survey of the genus *Lithospermum*. J. Arn. Arb. 33: 299-366.



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