

MELAMPYRUM LINEARE Desr.
Cow-wheat

FAMILY: Scrophulariaceae

SYNONYMS: *Melampyrum lineare* Desr. var. *americanum* (Michx.) Beauverd;
Melampyrum lineare Desr. var. *latifolium* Bart.

HABIT: Annual herb to 4 dm.; flowering June-August; fruiting July-September.

SIMILAR SPECIES: *Melampyrum lineare* slightly resembles some of the members of the genus *Agalinis* (*Gerardia*). *M. lineare* has small white flowers, 6-12 mm. long. The flowers of *Agalinis* are usually much larger and pink or purple in color.

TOTAL RANGE: Lab. to Alta. and B.C., s. to VA, OH, n. IN, and MN, and along the mts. to GA.

STATE RANGE (as of 2008): There are post-1980 records from Geauga, Hocking, Lake, Lorain, and Lucas Counties. There are Pre-1980 records from Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Henry, and Summit counties.

HABITAT: Dry to moist, slightly acid soil along riverbanks and in rocky oak woods and on their margins.

HAZARDS: Overgrowth by woody species through succession.

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: Unknown, but perhaps good as it tolerates moderate disturbance.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: Mature flowering material is needed for positive identification.

COMMENTS: *Melampyrum lineare* is a root parasite and apparently is not host-specific, being able to parasitize dicots, monocots, conifers, ferns, and even bryophytes (Piehl, 1962).

It is possible that this species is more frequent in Ohio than current records indicate. It could easily be overlooked due to its small size. It should be sought throughout northern Ohio.

Some authors split *M. lineare* into 4 varieties. Ohio material matches the 2 varieties listed above in Synonyms. However, most authors consider the species as a single, variable unit with too much intergradation between proposed varieties to support the concept of distinct varieties. The Ohio plants intergrade considerably, so we herein treat *M. lineare* as a single entity.

SELECTED REFERENCES:

Bentz, G.D. and T.S. Cooperrider. 1978. The Scrophulariaceae subfamily Rhinanthoideae of Ohio. *Castanea* 43: 145-154.

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.

Piehl, M.A. 1962. The parasitic behavior of *Melampyrum lineare* and a note on its seed color. *Rhodora* 64: 15-23.



Division of Natural Areas and Preserves
Ohio Department of Natural Resources

Created: 2/1982 James F. Burns