

MELANTHIUM VIRGINICUM L.
Bunchflower

FAMILY: Liliaceae

SYNONYM: *Veratrum virginicum* (L.) Aiton f.

HABIT: Erect perennial herb from a stout rhizome, to 15 dm.; flowering June, July.

SIMILAR SPECIES: *Melanthium virginicum* is distinguished from other similar species of related genera by its pubescent stem and inflorescence, gland bearing, distinctly clawed sepals, and petals free from the ovary.

TOTAL RANGE: NY to IN and MN, s. to FL and TX.

STATE RANGE (as of 2008): Post-1980 records are known from Adams, Clark, Madison, Portage, Richland, and Wayne counties. There are pre-1980 specimens from Hamilton, Montgomery, Noble, and Summit counties.

HABITAT: A variety of wet woods, low thickets, meadows, swales, and savannas. In Ohio, it currently appears to be restricted to fen habitats.

HAZARDS: Overshading by woody species as a result of succession.

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: Probably poor due to the limited amount of fen habitat remaining in Ohio.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: Mature flowering material is needed for positive identification. Collect only the flowering stem; the rhizome should be left in the ground.

COMMENTS: The current knowledge of the range of this species in Ohio probably is accurate. This tall herb with a showy inflorescence is unlikely to be overlooked or misidentified while in flower.

Kupchan et al. (1961) place this species within the genus *Veratrum* (see Synonym) on the basis of its similarities to members of that genus. However, this treatment has not gained general acceptance, and thus, the name *Melanthium virginicum* is retained here.

SELECTED REFERENCES:

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

Kupchan, S.M., J.H. Zimmerman, and A. Afonso. 1961. The alkaloids and taxonomy of *Veratrum* and related genera. *Lloydia* 24: 1-26.



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