

MELANTHIUM WOODII (Robbins ex Wood) Bodkin
Wood's Hellebore

FAMILY: Liliaceae

SYNONYMS: *Veratrum woodii* Robbins ex Wood

HABIT: Herbaceous perennial from a large bulb, basal leaves to 30 cm.; flowering stalks to 14 dm.; flowering July, August; fruiting August, September.

SIMILAR SPECIES: When in bloom this species is most distinctive and not likely to be misidentified. Mature, non-flowering plants are characterized by large, corrugated leaves that are unlike any other native Ohio plant. However, young leaves or the leaves of very young plants somewhat resemble wild leeks (*Allium tricoccum*), but may be distinguished by their evident veins and plicate appearance.

TOTAL RANGE: OH, IN, IL, and s. IA, s. to n. FL, AR, and e. OK.

STATE RANGE: There are post-1980 reports from 3 counties: Darke, Miami and Montgomery. There are pre-1980 specimens from Auglaize and Shelby counties. All populations occur in the Great Miami or Stillwater River valleys.

HABITAT: Shaded stream terraces and mesic slopes; usually in situations which are irregularly inundated.

HAZARDS: Removal of forest canopy; stream channelization.

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: Unknown, but probably poor; reproduction difficulties seem widespread in this species.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: Collect a portion of the flowering panicle and one of the basal leaves; avoid over-collecting.

COMMENTS: This species seems restricted in Ohio to a few river systems and to mature, undisturbed habitats. The populations vary in size from many hundreds of plants to only a few individuals. The plants bloom quite erratically with long periods between flowering. Seed set is seldom observed. More research is needed to understand the reproduction difficulties that seem to occur throughout the range of this species.

Continued searching of river systems in west central Ohio may locate additional populations. However, the species is quite distinctive and its state range may well be accurately known.

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Ohio Department of Natural Resources
Division of Natural Areas and Preserves

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