

MINUARTIA PATULA (Michx.) Mattf.  
Spreading Sandwort

FAMILY: Caryophyllaceae

SYNONYM: *Arenaria patula* Michx.

HABIT: Diffusely branched herbaceous annual or winter-annual, decumbent or erect, 1-2 dm.; flowering late April-May; fruiting May-early July.

SIMILAR SPECIES: This species has basic similarities to other plants within the family as well as within the genus. The genus *Arenaria* is recognized by its estipulate leaves, entire or emarginate petals, and 3 styles.

TOTAL RANGE: OH to e. KS, s. to AL, AR, and TX; local in s. OK.

STATE RANGE: There are post-1980 records from Adams County. Also, there is an 1898 record from Montgomery County.

HABITAT: Limestone slopes, open rocky ground, open woods, open sandy ground.

HAZARDS: Soil compaction; overshadowing by woody species through succession.

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: Evidently good; this plant is tolerant of high levels of pollutants, such as zinc, that eliminate other species. It can invade and establish itself on recently disturbed ground and does well even when introduced north of its normal range. The rarity of this plant in Ohio, however, seems to contradict this.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: Collect mature flowering or fruiting material with underground parts; avoid over-collecting.

COMMENTS: Controversy surrounds the proper genus into which this species should be placed (see Synonym). It is here retained in *Arenaria* pending further research into this problem. This is a highly variable species. Some authors separate *Arenaria patula* into three varieties, *patula*, *robusta*, and *pitcheri*, while others prefer four formas, *patula*, *robusta*, *pitcheri*, and *media*. According to Steyermark (1941), who divides the species into formas, there are apparent extremes of variations within the species but intergrades are abundant. The variations are scattered throughout the distribution area with no apparent geographical ranges. Only the typical var. *patula* has been reported from Ohio. The species is here treated as a single unit pending further research.

This inconspicuous plant is easily overlooked. Its blooming period is early and quite brief. It may be more frequent than the few records indicate. It should be sought throughout southern Ohio.

SELECTED REFERENCES:

Jordan, M.J. 1975. Effects of zinc smelter emissions and fire on a chestnut-oak woodland. *Ecology* 56: 78-91.

Steyermark, J.A. 1941. A study of *Arenaria patula*. *Rhodora* 43: 325-333.

Ohio



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