

PODOSTEMUM CERATOPHYLLUM Michx.  
Riverweed

FAMILY: Podostemaceae

HABIT: A multi-branched thallus of indeterminate size, flattened against the substrate and clinging to rocks with disc-like processes in place of roots; flowering and fruiting July-October.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Superficially resembles an alga or bryophyte. Distinguished by the presence of flowers or fruits in the leaf axils. See illustration in Godfrey & Wooten (1981).

TOTAL RANGE: Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and ME to GA, w. to s. Ontario, WV, KY, OK, and LA.; W.I., Central America.

STATE RANGE (as of 2008): There is a post-1980 record from Ashtabula County.

HABITAT: On rock exposures and stones in the bottoms of swiftly-flowing streams; often growing at the lips of waterfalls.

HAZARDS: Siltation and water pollution; Meijer (1976) suggests that the occurrence of riverweed is an indicator of good water quality.

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: Unknown, but probably poor.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: Collect flowering or fruiting specimens only. Look carefully in the sheathing leaf bases to find the tiny flowers or fruits hidden therein. Population size should be estimated by noting the physical extent of the plants along the stream. It is nearly impossible to count individual plants.

COMMENTS: Riverweed at one time grew in many sites along the Appalachian Plateau in the eastern U.S. Most of these populations have been destroyed by water pollution and siltation. The habitat today is extremely rare in Ohio. However, the species is inconspicuous and the habitat is difficult to survey. Therefore, continued investigations in eastern Ohio may turn up additional populations of this species.

Riverweed was erroneously attributed to Ohio by Van Royen (1954), who misinterpreted the data on the type specimen "Ohio River near Louisville". This is the basis for the listing of this species for Ohio in Weishaupt (1971). This situation was clarified by Roberts & Cooperrider (1982).

SELECTED REFERENCES:

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Roberts, M. L. and T. S. Cooperrider. 1982. Dicotyledons. In: Cooperrider, T. S. (ed.). Endangered and threatened plants of Ohio. Ohio Biol. Surv. Biol. Notes No. 16. 48-84.

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