

POTENTILLA PALUSTRIS (L.) Scop.
Marsh Fivefinger

FAMILY: Rosaceae

HABIT: Decumbent to ascending, herbaceous, rhizomatous perennial, 2-6 dm.; flowering June-August; fruiting June-August.

SIMILAR SPECIES: This is the only Ohio *Potentilla* with deep purple flowers. *Geum rivale* also has purple flowers and grows in the same habitat as *P. palustris*. The two plants differ in size, leaf shape and fruit characters.

TOTAL RANGE: Circumboreal, s. to NJ, OH, IA, and CA.

STATE RANGE (as of 2008): There are post-1980 records from Logan, Portage, Richland, Stark, Summit, and Wayne counties. There are pre-1980 records from Cuyahoga and Lucas counties.

HABITAT: Swamps, bogs, streambanks, wet meadows, pond and kettle-hole lake margins.

HAZARDS: Drying of the habitat, overshadowing by woody species through succession; soil compaction.

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: Apparently good, as demonstrated by this species' persistence in the weedy margins of disturbed kettle-hole lakes.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: Collect mature flowering or fruiting material. Collect above ground parts only; leave the rhizome in the ground.

COMMENTS: Some manuals divide *Potentilla palustris* into 3 varieties, two of which may be distinguished in Ohio, var. *palustris* and var. *parviflora* (Raf.) Fern. & Long. *P. palustris* var. *parviflora* is generally smaller, with few-flowered stems and more obovate to truncate leaves.

The status of the genus *Potentilla* has been a matter of some controversy in the past. Several authors have proposed merging it with *Fragaria*. The weak intergeneric barriers between the two have been demonstrated by several studies, such as that by Asker (1971).

This conspicuous plant should be sought throughout glaciated Ohio.

SELECTED REFERENCES:

Asker, S. 1971. Some viewpoints on *Fragaria* X *Potentilla* intergeneric hybridization. *Hereditas* 67: 181-190.



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Division of Natural Areas and Preserves

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