

RHUS AROMATICA Ait.
var. ARENARIA (Greene) Fernald
Beach Sumac

FAMILY: Anacardiaceae

SYNONYMS: *Rhus arenaria* Greene
Rhus trilobata Nutt. var. *arenaria* (Greene) Barkley

HABIT: Creeping, deciduous shrub to 1 m; flowers late April-May, fruits July-August.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Extremely similar to and difficult to distinguish from the other, more common varieties of *Rhus aromatica*.

TOTAL RANGE: Endemic to the Great Lakes shores in n. OH, n. IN, n. IL and e. WI.

STATE RANGE: A small colony near Lake Erie in Ashtabula County was reported in 1931.

HABITAT: In full sun in well-drained, neutral to calcareous substrates; limestone cliffs, sand dunes, quarry floors.

HAZARDS: Overgrowth by taller woody species as a result of succession.

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: Unknown.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: Make careful notes as to habitat and height of the plant; collect the same plant both in flower and in leaf.

COMMENTS: The taxonomic status of this plant is somewhat dubious as this variety is an indeterminate entity with poorly defined boundaries. Depressed growth forms of *R. aromatica* and *R. trilobata* may actually be environmental forms, rather than genetically unique taxa. Many populations in Ohio appear to display a mixture of characters attributed to the several varieties of *R. aromatica*. For example, the var. *arenaria* allegedly is a depressed shrub that blooms before leaf expansion. Plants exhibiting these characters may be found, but these same plants often do not display any other characters of the variety, such as the leaf shape or pedicel length. Plants of both depressed and upright habit may be seen in the same area blooming prior to leaf expansion in some cases and after leaf expansion in others. More research is needed before the true status of the var. *arenaria* can be ascertained. The only specimens that have been assigned to this variety in Ohio are from a site in Ashtabula County that has now been destroyed (Hicks 1933). However, these specimens are from sterile plants and lack data on growth habit.

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