

VERNONIA MISSURICA Raf.
Missouri Ironweed

FAMILY: Asteraceae

HABIT: perennial herbs from a short rootstalk, flowering stalks to 2 m.; flowering and fruiting late August-September.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Very similar to the tall ironweed (*Vernonia gigantea*) which occurs in every county of Ohio. The two species are distinguished by the number of flowers per head. Missouri ironweed also is more uniformly and persistently pubescent than tall ironweed. These two species hybridize on occasion (see state range).

TOTAL RANGE: S. MI south to TN and MS, west to IA and TX.

STATE RANGE: Post-1980 records from Clark and Lucas counties. Hybrids between this species and tall ironweed have been collected in Clinton, Defiance, and Lucas counties.

HABITAT: Mesic prairies and grassy roadsides; the Ohio populations occur in the oak openings region and in a remnant of big bluestem prairie along a railroad.

HAZARDS: Drainage and other superficial disturbance of prairie soils; overgrowth by woody vegetation.

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: Unknown, possibly poor.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: Collect flowering or fruiting specimens including a section of stem with cauline leaves. Estimate aerial extent of suitable habitat in acres.

COMMENTS: This species is easily misidentified as the tall ironweed that occurs in every county of Ohio. The differences are subtle and require experience with both species in the field. Adding to the confusion are the presence of hybrids. Missouri ironweed should be sought throughout western Ohio. It is extant in two Michigan counties adjacent to Ohio. A careful search should discover additional occurrences of this species. Missouri ironweed is reported also to hybridize with prairie ironweed (*Vernonia fasciculata*), but this hybrid is not known from Ohio.

SELECTED REFERENCES:

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