

POLYGALA CRUCIATA L.
Cross-leaved Milkwort

FAMILY: Polygalaceae

HABIT: Erect annual herb, 1-5 dm.; flowering July-September; fruiting August, September.

SIMILAR SPECIES: *Polygala cruciata* closely resembles the common *P. sanguinea* (Field Milkwort) and the rare *P. curtissii* (Curtiss' Milkwort) all of which have more or less dense, head-like racemes of rose-purple flowers. However, *P. cruciata* is the only one of these with leaves in whorls of 3 or 4.

TOTAL RANGE: Chiefly on the Atlantic and Gulf coastal plain, ME to FL and TX; scattered inland stations from KY, OH, and MI to IL and MN.

STATE RANGE (as of 2008): Post-1980 records are all from Lucas County. There is a pre-1960 record from Wood County.

HABITAT: Open to semi-open situations in damp or wet, sandy or peaty soil.

HAZARDS: Over-collecting; possibly overshadowing by woody species due to succession.

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: Unknown, probably poor. However, it may respond favorably to moderate habitat disturbance.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: Collect a complete, mature specimen but avoid unnecessary disturbance of the population. Avoid over-collecting.

COMMENTS: This species is easily overlooked due to its small size and close resemblance to other milkworts. It does appear to be restricted to northwestern Ohio and should be sought in suitable habitats in that quarter of the state.

Some authors divide this species into two varieties. Under this concept, Ohio plants are the var. *aquilonia* Fern. & Schub. The typical variety occurs to the southeast of Ohio.

SELECTED REFERENCES:

Cooperrider, T.S. 1995. The Dicotyledoneae of Ohio. Part 2. Linaceae through Campanulaceae. Ohio State Univ. Press, Columbus, OH. 656 pp.

Miller, N.G. 1971. The Polygalaceae in the southeastern United States. J. Arn. Arb. 52: 267-284.



Ohio Department of Natural Resources
Division of Natural Areas and Preserves

Created: 1/1984 James F. Burns, Allison W. Cusick