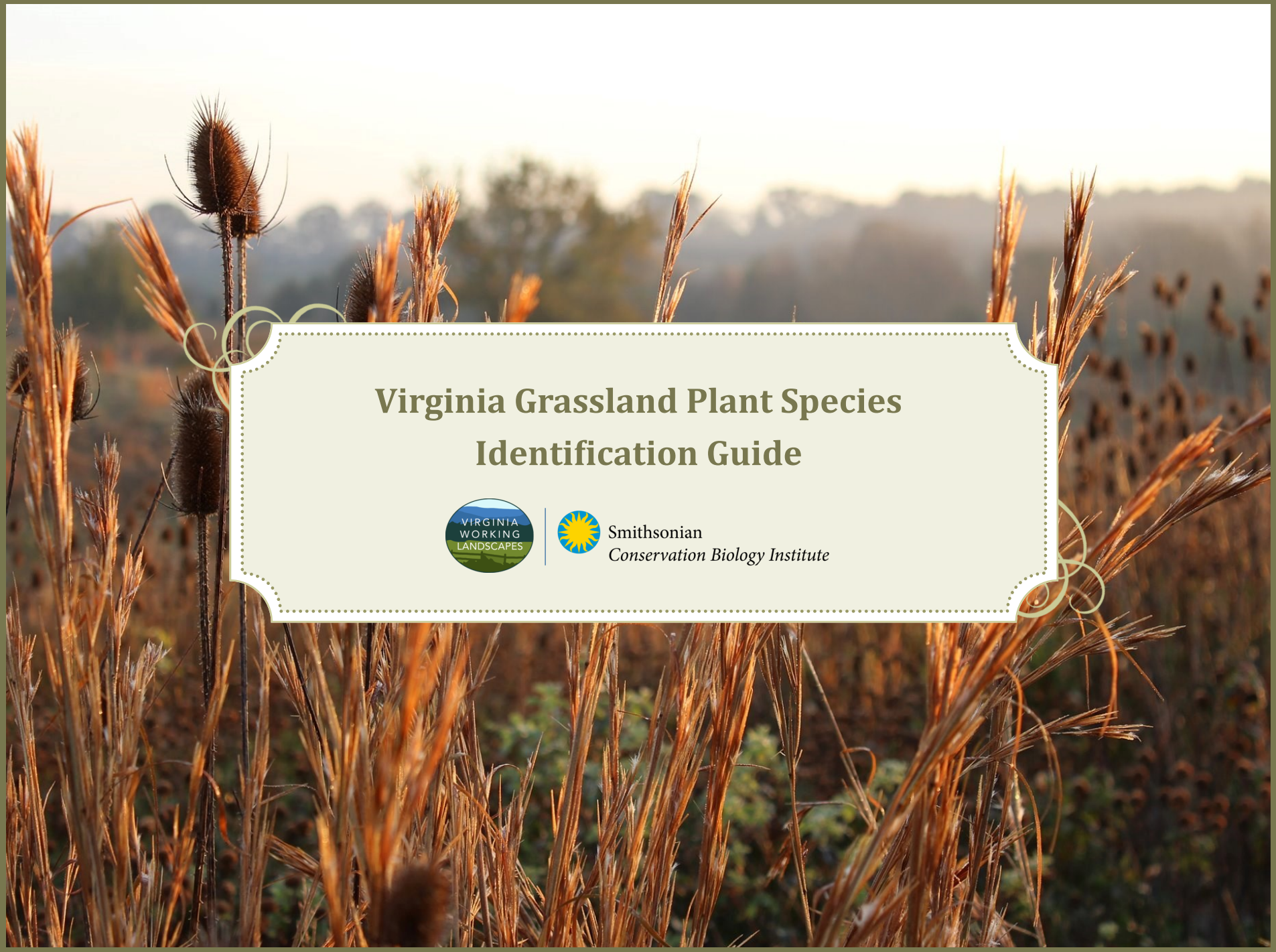

# Virginia Grassland Plant Species Identification Guide

VIRGINIA WORKING LANDSCAPES

Smithsonian
*Conservation Biology Institute*

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Information compiled by & biological illustrations by:

Piper Jefferson

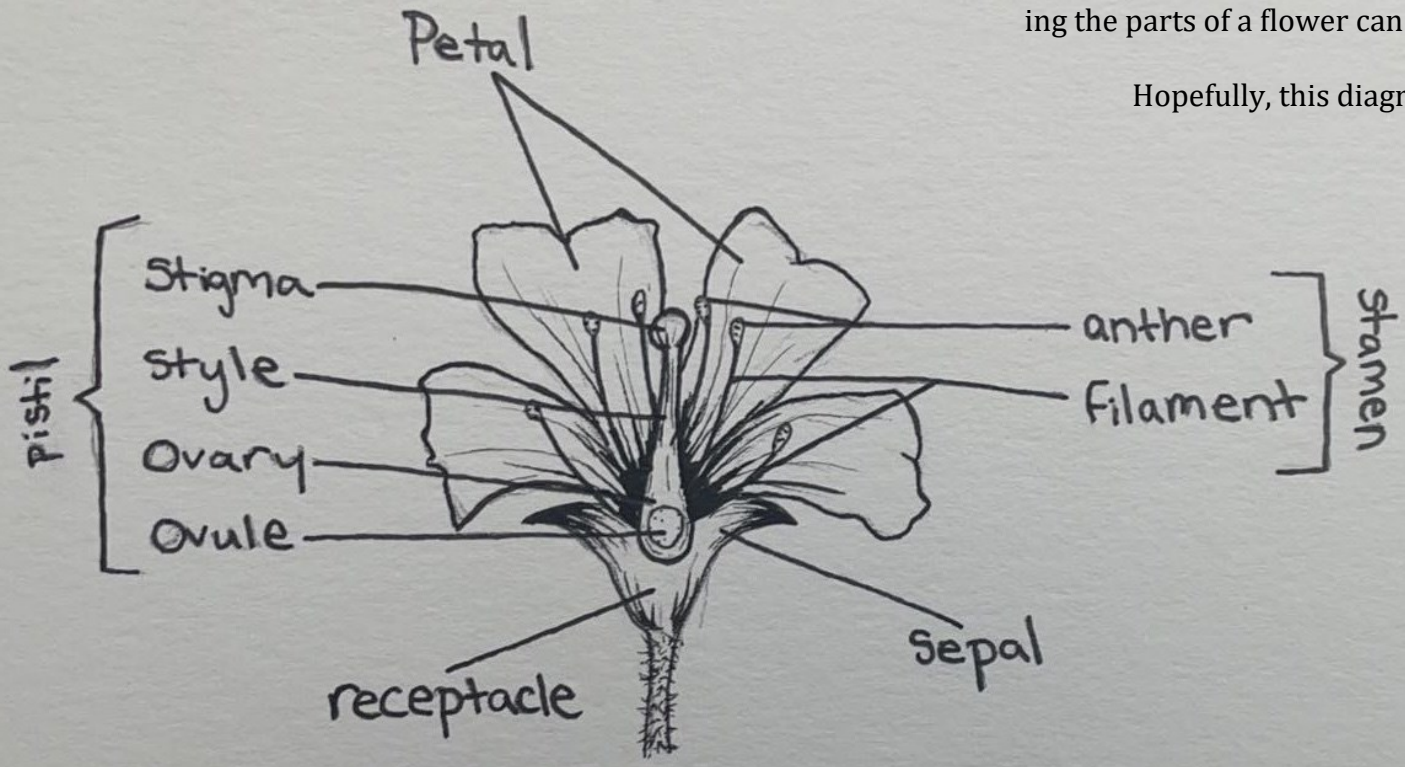
# Grassland Forb Species

## in the Northern Piedmont and Northern Blue Ridge Regions

# Parts of a Flower

Forbs, also referred to as weeds or wildflowers, are flowering, non-woody, broadleaf, herbaceous plants other than grasses—especially those growing in fields, prairies, or meadows. Oftentimes, the best way to identify a forb is via its flowers, so knowing the parts of a flower can be very insightful.

Hopefully, this diagram helps!



# Carolina Horse-Nettle:
## *Solanum carolinense var. Carolinense*

Family: Solanaceae

Carolina Horse-Nettle is native to the southeastern United States and has spread widely throughout much of temperate North America. They can often be found growing in pastures, roadsides, railroad margins, disturbed areas, and waste grounds.


Fig. 1


Fig. 2

Identifying Characteristics:

- ~3 ft. tall
- White/yellow spines up the stem and on the leaves
- White or violet flowers; 5 petals
- Round, ½" fruits develop, turn yellow when mature
- Thrives in full sun, tolerates most soil types, and is food to many native insects and other animals
- Tends to dominate area like a weed

Has small white flowers with 5 petals accompanied by 5 sepals to make a star-shaped calyx. Figures 1 and 2 show flowers at and before anthesis.


Fig. 3

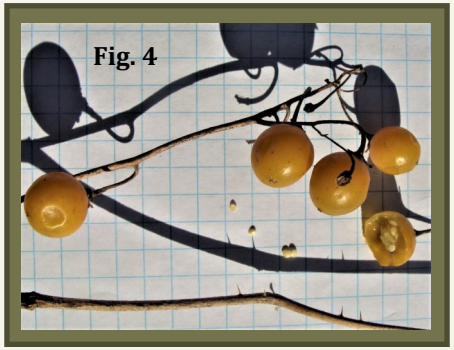


Fig. 4

Produces 1/2 inch round fruits. Mature fruits will be yellow (figure 3), and will persist on a dead stalk (figure 4).


Fig. 5

Has a main stalk with several branches. The larger leaves will have 2-4 lateral lobes and a long, lobed apex (top point). The stems and branches are covered in protective rigid prickles (figure 5).

# White Clover:
## Trifolium repens

Family: Fabaceae

Although white clover can be found all over the US, it is not native to this area.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Trifoliate "egg-shaped" Leaves and white flowers
- Leaves have a lighter green or white 'V' on the inner portion of the leaf
- Root system with stems that root at the nodes


Fig. 2

Trifoliate leaves on a 1-3 inch stalk that is perpendicular to the ground. Leaflets are broadly oval, sometimes round, and are about ½ inch in diameter. Often with a white crescent across the middle of the leaflets but not always (fig 2).


Fig. 1

Has round flower heads about ½ inch in diameter that are densely packed with little, white flowers (fig 1). Stalk is about 3 inches and emerges perpendicular to the ground. Flower heads are typically about an inch higher than the leaves which carpet the ground (fig 3).


Fig. 3

# Red Clover:
## *Trifolium pratense*

Family: Fabaceae

Red Clover is not native to North America, however, it is planted in many areas of it as it is an effective crop to re-energize depleted soil.

Identifying Characteristics:
- Trifoliate, ovate leaves with a white "V" pattern
- Pink or purple compound flower head
- Can grow to be 6"-24"
- Has a hairy stem


Ovate (unlike white clover), green leaves with three leaflets. Leaflets range from ½- 2 inches long with a white V pattern in the middle of the leaflet (fig. 4). Stems have fine hairs and a strongly veined, oval stipule (fig. 3).



Flower heads are about 1 inch long and ½-1 inch wide and can be either pink or purple (fig. 2). Each flower within the flower head is about ½ inch long, and turn brown as fall approaches. The blooming season for red clover is from June to September.

# Common Yellow Oxalis:
## *Oxalis stricta*

Family: Oxalidaceae

Common yellow oxalis is a native North American plant that is typically considered a weed. Several common names include sour grass, shamrock, sleeping beauty, sour trefoil, and sheep's clover.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Green, but sometimes with a purple case
- Can grow 6-15 inches tall
- Small yellow flowers with five petals
- Trifoliate, heart-shaped leaflets
- Is tolerant to a wide range of conditions - most commonly found in fields, woods, borders, along roadsides and in other waste areas, and can grow in the cracks of sidewalks.


Fig. 1

Leaves are alternate, smooth and palmately compound. Each is divided into three heart-shaped leaflets, similar to a clover leaf, with faintly hairy margins (fig. 1).


The leaves, flowers, and fruits of this forb are edible and have a sour and tart, lemon flavor. The seed pods (fig. 4) in particular have a strong, sour taste.


These yellow flowers have 5 petals that are held in an open cup that can be up to ½ inch across. They may occur singly or in axillary clusters of up to five flowers. Blooms will first appear in mid spring and then continue into the fall (fig. 3).

# Annual Ragweed:
## *Ambrosia artemisiifolia*

Family: Asteraceae

Annual ragweed is native to Virginia and prefers full sun and slightly dry conditions. It can be often found growing in disturbed areas such as fields, pastures, and roadsides.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Up to 7 feet tall, branches frequently
- Stems are hairy and green, often with a light pink hue
- Leaves can be 4-10 cm long and are hairy
- Leaves are opposite or alternate along the stems.




Leaves are 4-10 cm long, hairy, and are usually egg-shaped once or twice compound (fig. 3). The leaves are generally alternate, although the lower leaves are occasionally opposite. The hairy stem can be green to pinkish-red (fig. 2).

The flowers occur in small clusters on terminal branches (fig. 1). The male and female flowers occur in different sections of the plant, with male flowers occurring in the long, slender racemes, and females at the leaf axils. A single seed forms in each 3 to 4 mm long achene (fig. 4).

# Wild Garlic:
## *Allium vineale*

Family: Amaryllidaceae

Wild garlic is an invasive plant that grows from a bulb. Originally from Europe, wild garlic thrives in fields, meadows, waste grounds, and other disturbed areas.

Identifying Characteristics:
- Tubular leaves (like chives)
- Can grow around 11-35 inches tall
- Produce small, purple or white tubular flowers in Spring-Summer
- Plants are edible—smell and tastes like garlic


Fig. 1


Fig. 2

Courtesy of The Morton Arboretum


Fig. 3

The 2 –3 inch inflorescence is covered by a sack-like membrane that is rounded at the bottom and pointed at the top. This membrane will split open to release the bulbils and/or flowers. Flowers are 1/4 inch and white or purple with 6 tepals (fig. 3).

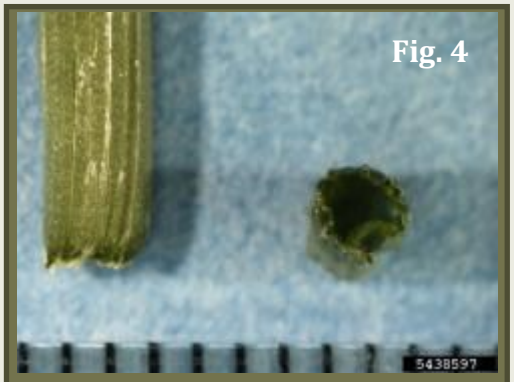


Fig. 4

Basal, long, thin, and hollow leaves with a circular cross-section (fig. 4). The leaves may be straight or slightly curled. It will smell pungently of garlic when crushed. Can grow up to 10 inches long and 3/4 inches wide at the base.


Fig. 5

The entire plant is edible for humans—the leaves, flowers, and bulb.

# Narrowleaf Plantain:
## *Plantago lanceolata*

Family: Plantaginaceae

Narrowleaf Plantain is a perennial weed found throughout the continental United States, though it is non-native. Can often be found in lawns, roadsides, woodland edges, fields, and waste areas.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Narrow and linear leaves from a basal rosette
- Flowering spikes
- Can grow 6 - 16 inches tall




The leaves are basal, narrow, and lance-elliptic, 4 -16 inches long and ½ to 1½ inches wide. They are mostly toothless, with smooth or short fine hairy surfaces and 3, 5, or 7 prominent veins along the length (fig. 1). The flowering stems are grooved and in some areas are covered in short hairs, especially towards the base.

The flowers are densely packed in a cylindrical spike about ½ - 3 inches long and about 1/3 inch wide. The flowers open in rings around the spike (fig. 3), starting at the bottom and progressing upwards. Spent flowers, sepals, and bracts below the blooms are light brown with a papery texture, while buds above the blooms are gray-green (fig. 3).

# Queen Anne's Lace:
## *Daucus carota*

Family: Apiaceae

Queen Anne's lace is an invasive species that tend to grow in disturbed and newly restored areas where it can outcompete other species due to its ability to mature and grow quickly. Though their numbers tend to decline as native grasses and forbs reestablish.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Has small, compound individual white flowers arranged in a flat-topped umbel
- Can range from 1-5 feet tall
- May smell like a carrot when damaged - is the ancestor of the garden carrot.


Oblong, feathered, and pinnately divided leaves start immediately below the flower. They can have sparse hairs on their undersides. Stalks, similarly, have white little hairs all over them (fig. 1 & 6). Note the grooved stalk in (fig. 2).




Queen Anne's Lace has compound and tiny individual white flowers that are arranged in a flat-topped umbel (fig. 3). These are normally 2-4 inches in diameter. When the umbel reaches maturity, it may become concave. There is usually one dark red or purple flower in the center of the umbel. These flowers bloom from May through October and are not fragrant.

# Field Clover:
## *Trifolium campestre*

Family: Fabaceae

Field clover is an invasive species that grows wild in all but six states. Their habitats can include savannas, abandoned fields and pastures, the edges of paths, disturbed meadows, and vacant lots.

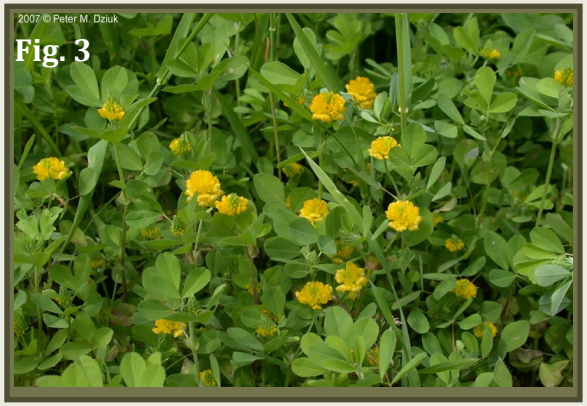
Identifying Characteristics:

- Can grow up to 1 foot tall, tends to sprawl
- Has a bushy appearance
- Alternate leaves are trifoliate, and have long, hairless petioles.
- Spherical, yellow flowerheads—each with 15-40 flowers


Leaves have straight, pinnate veins, but lack the typical white chevron marking that many clovers have (fig. 1).


The flower heads of field clover are about ½ inch long and are densely packed with tiny yellow pea-shaped flowers. These flowers bloom from May-September and turn a creamy color then rusty brown before going to seed. Each head will have anywhere from 15 to 40 flowers.

This forb often goes by a handful of different names. Some include Low-Hop Clover, Field Clover, Large Hop Clover, and Hop Trefoil.




# Indian Hemp:
## *Apocynum cannabinum*

Family: Apocynaceae

Indian hemp is a native forb, growing throughout the US and scattered in Canada. It can often be found along roadsides, in thickets, fields, lakeshores, waterways, and disturbed areas.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Strong, purple stem that can reach 3-4 feet tall
- Sharp, long, oval, green leaves that are 2-6 inches long
- Secretes a milky juice when bruised or broken
- Often grows in large colonies
- Small greenish-white flowers that will appear from June to August
- Seeds produced inside slender pods that are green and then eventually turn red and then dark brown.


Fig. 1

The entire plant will grow up to about 4 feet tall with a dark purple stem (figs. 1 and 4). It will produce the small white/green flowers (figs. 2 and 4) in the summertime which will later develop into the slender seed pods that can be seen above (fig. 1).

Other common names include Amy root, rheumatism root, and wild cotton.

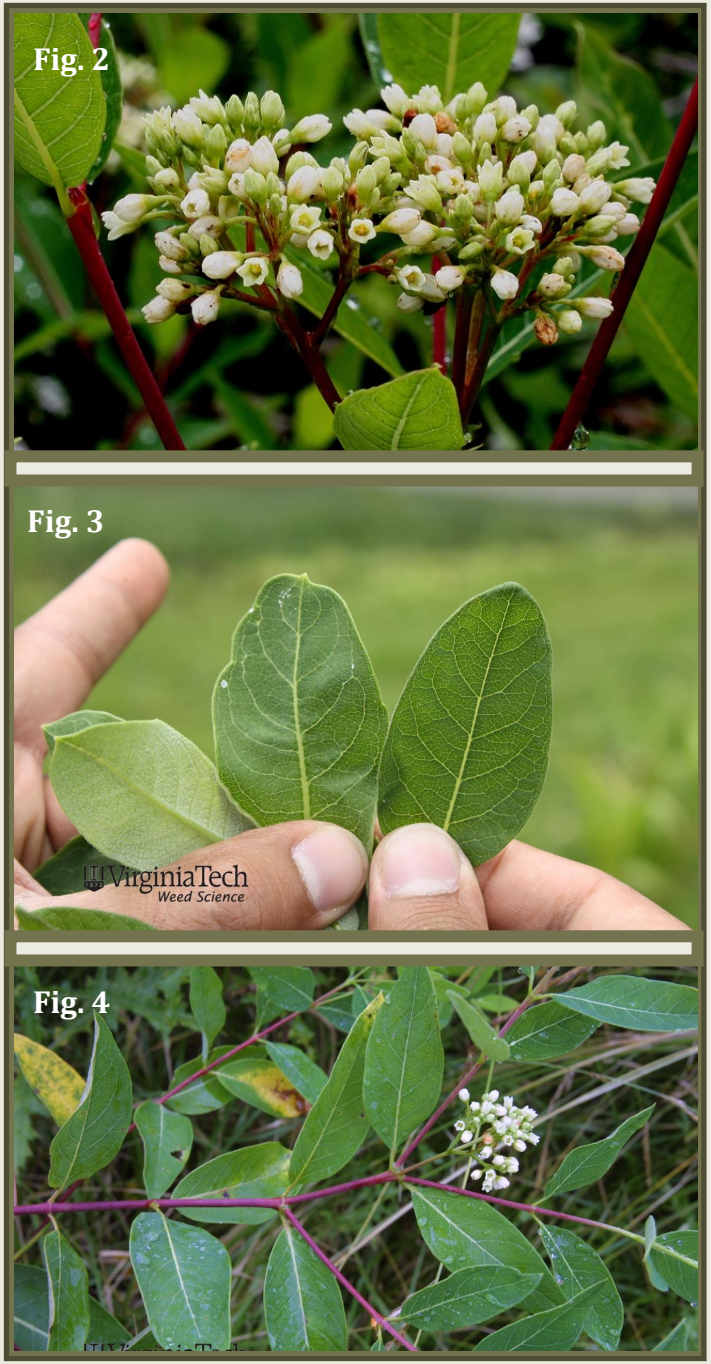


Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

# Yellow Crownbeard:
## *Verbesina occidentalis*

Family: Asteraceae

Yellow crownbeard is a native, perennial, flowering plant that thrives in moist, but sunny areas such as upland prairies, savannas, glades, upland forests, and along railroads and roadsides. This forb can easily be mistaken for another similar plant called wingstem, which often grows in the same areas as yellow crownbeard.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Dark yellow, aster-like flowers
- Leaves are opposite and toothed, and the upper surface of leaves are hairy
- Can grow up to be 4 feet tall
- Leaves have winged petioles that extend down the stem.


Fig. 1


Fig. 2

Yellow crownbeard can be best identified through its leaves, which can be easily distinguished from the similar wingstem forb. the leaves of yellow crownbeard are opposite, broadly ovate, and are gently toothed, whereas the leaves of wingstem are alternate, long and narrow, entire to serrate, and are coarse like sandpaper.

Yellow crownbeard flowers will bloom from May–to October. There are few flower heads on each stem, typically 1-10. They are yellow, with 8–15 rays that spread horizontally.


Fig. 3

# Common Milkweed:
## *Asclepias syriaca*

Family: Apocynaceae

Common milkweed is a native perennial of the eastern United States and up into Canada. It prefers well-drained soils, and will often be found in upland fields, woodland margins, and disturbed areas including roadsides.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Flower color ranges from pink to white and are highly fragrant
- When leaves or stem are broken, a milky sap will be released
- Fine, soft hairs on underside of leaves
- Mature leaves are typically broad
- Large, spiny seed pods


Fig. 1

Common milkweed has large clusters of pink/white/ lilac flowers, as shown in fig. 3.

The leaves are broadly elliptical and rounded at the base. They are around 6 inches long with fine hairs underneath.

The fruit of the plant is large, elongated seedpods that are covered with soft prickles. When dried, they split and release hundreds of seeds, each attached to a head of fluffy, white hair that carries them in the wind (fig. 2).


Fig. 2


Fig. 3


Fig. 4

# Common Dandelion:
## *Taraxacum officinale*

Family: Asteraceae

Common dandelions are a non-native, perennial forb from Eurasia. In Virginia, they bloom from April until September, and can often be found in areas with part shade and part sun, disturbed soil, lawns, roadsides, waste areas, and open woods.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Solitary, 1-2 inch, yellow flowerheads
- Leaves are generally 6-8 inches long with irregularly lobed edges
- The fruit of a dandelion is its dry seed which has a tuft of white hairs to carry it on the wind.


The edges of dandelion leaves are deeply lobed with sharp and irregular teeth—some varying in shape and size and some having more consistency throughout. The terminal lobe is typically the largest (fig. 1).

Flowering stems are greenish-purple and are usually smooth or sometimes sparsely hairy up at the top of the stalk (fig. 2 and 3).

A mature dandelion forms a basal rosette as seen in figure 1. The leaves, flower stalks, and the taproot of mature plants exude a milky juice when cut open. Flower heads are easily recognizable from the bright yellow and densely-packed rays and, later, fluffy tufts of white hair to carry around seeds (fig. 2).


# Wingstem:
## *Verbesina alternifolia*

Family: Asteraceae

Wingstem is a native, perennial forb that can grow to be up to 13 feet tall with bright yellow flowers and "wings" that run along the stem. This plant can primarily be found in pastures, hay fields, fencerows, roadsides, and rights-of-way.

Identifying Characteristics:
- Can grow very tall—up to 13 feet
- Alternate and lanceolate leaves
- Distinctive "wings" that run the length of the stem
- Bright yellow flowers


Fig. 1


Fig. 2

Fig. 3

The stems of the wingstem are erect and usually unbranching, but occasionally branching out. Stems usually do not have hairs but sometimes have small, fine hairs. Several wings run the length of the entire stem, as seen in fig 2.

Most wingstem flowers will occur in clusters at the ends of erect stems. Each flower has outer ray flowers and inner disc flowers, all of which are bright yellow (fig. 1). Ray flowers are around 3/4 -1 1/4 inches long and 3—6 mm wide.


Fig. 4

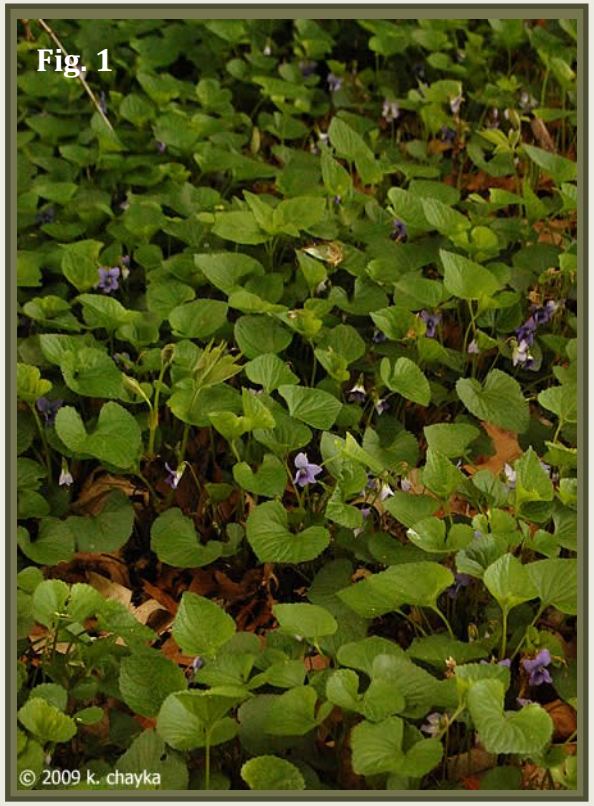
# Violet:
## *Viola*

Family: Violaceae

There are a variety of violet species that can vary in color and shape, but all are typically found within shady areas that have moist soil but do have the ability to also grow in sunny areas with some drought.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Heart-shaped leaves with rounded teeth
- Flower color may depend on species, but common blue and wooly blue violets both have a purple/blue/violet color.
- Distinctive, slightly irregularly shaped flower with five petals
- Leaf and flower stems are usually hairy




Common violets have a single flower at the end of a densely hairy, but smooth, stem. Flowers are about ¾ to 1 inch across and are slightly irregular with 5 broadly spreading petals (figs. 2 and 3).

The leaves are basal and around 2 inches long and wide. They are generally heart-shaped and have rounded lobes at the base, rounded teeth around the margins, and are on a stem up to 6 inches long.




# Piedmont Bedstraw:
## *Galium pedemontanum*

Family: Rubiaceae

Piedmont bedstraw is an invasive species that can often be found growing in waste grounds, disturbed sites, roadsides, trail sides, forest edges, yards, paths, and grassy fields. It prefers sunny locations and is commonly found along rock walls, at the base of buildings, and on sidewalks.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Usually grows between 4-16 inches tall
- It branches at the base and divides into several leafy, unbranched stems
- Leaves and stems are hairy
- 2-4 yellow flowers grow from the axils of the lower/middle to upper leaves




This plant will have either solitary or small groups of 2-4 flowers growing from the axils of the lower/middle to upper leaves. Each flower is about 1.5 mm. across and has 4 short stamens with yellow anthers, and a green pistil (fig. 3).

Can often be found on the edges of yards, in grassy fields, on roadsides, along railroads, fence rows, at the base of buildings, areas at the base of rock walls, and on waste grounds. In this area, they are primarily found in disturbed habitats that are not subject to regular mowing.

The stems of Piedmont bedstraw are light/medium green and are covered with long and short hairs. Along each stem are whorls of 4 spreading leaves (fig. 1). These leaves are about 5-11 mm. long, 2-4 mm. across, and are elliptic to elliptic-oblong in shape with toothless margins. Note the prominent midvein.

# Eastern Daisy Fleabane:
## *Erigeron annuus*

Family: Asteraceae

The eastern daisy fleabane is a native wildflower that can often be found along roadsides, in pastures, and inside any disturbed field or lot .

Identifying Characteristics:

- Has a  rosette of succulent, light green leaves
- Leaves are alternate and can grow up to 5 inches if not mowed regularly
- The lower leaves are coarsely toothed and tend to be broader. The upper leaves are narrower, not toothed, but are hairy.
- Grows a daisy-like flower with a central disk of yellow florets and a fringe of white rays
- Can grow up to 3 1/2 feet tall


Fig. 1


Fig. 2

This forb has clusters of flowers that can be seen in various stages of development on just one plant, beginning as green, rounded buds, and eventually developing into composite flowers. Each flower is about ½–¾ inch in diameter, with a central disk of yellow florets and many white rays (fig. 1). When flower buds begin to grow, the stem will often bend over, forming a "shepherd's crook" (fig. 3).


Fig. 3


Fig. 4

The leaves are up to 4 inches long and can be as broad as 2 inches. Leaves closer to the base are coarsely toothed and tend to be broader. The upper leaves are more narrow, hairy, and often have shorter or no stems (fig. 3 and 4). The first leaves at the base form a rosette (fig. 3). The photo above (fig. 2) shows a field of eastern daisy fleabane.

# Sericea Lespedeza :
## *Lespedeza cuneata*

Family: Fabaceae

Sericea lespedeza is a perineal and invasive forb that can most often be found in pastures, hay fields, roadsides, and abandoned fields.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Alternate leaves that divide into 3 smaller leaflets
- Erect and hairy stems
- Can reach up to 5 feet tall
- Flowers grow in the middle-upper part of the plant in the leaf axils
- Flowers can be solitary or in groups of 2-4 and are white with purple/violet markings


Fig. 1

Fig. 2

The stems of sericea lespedeza become woody with age and tend to have stiff bristles. Leaves are alternately arranged and each divide into three smaller leaflets. Each leaflet ranges from 1/2 -3/4 inches long and has many short hairs on both the top and bottom surfaces (fig. 3). Flowers bloom from July until October and grow in the leaf axils on the upper half of the plant. These flowers are white with some purple markings (fig. 1).

Fig. 3


Fig. 4


Fig. 5

# Common Threeseed Mercury:
## *Acalypha rhomboidea*

Family: Euphorbiaceae

Common Threeseed mercury is a native, annual forb that enjoys areas with part shade, sun; disturbed soil, and waste places. It can most often be found in abandoned lots, roadsides, railroads, and disturbed soils.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Alternately arranged, lanceolate leaves (figs. 1 and 4)
- Can grow 1-3 feet tall
- Leaves are hairy but stem may or may not have hairs
- Leaves are serrated with shallow, but blunt teeth (fig. 2)
- Small, petal-less flowers form in clusters at the leaf axils (fig. 2)

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Leaves are typically 1-4 inches long and 1 inch wide and are medium/dark green but the plant can become deep coppery red, especially the stems, bracts, and undersides of leaves (fig. 3). Stems are erect, hairless, or somewhat hairy, mostly unbranched with the occasional short flowering side branches.

Fig. 4

# Blackeyed Susan:
## *Rudbeckia hirta*

Family: Asteraceae

Blackeyed Susan is a native wildflower that can be found in nearly any sunny area in Virginia. They typically enjoy areas such as dry fields, along roadsides, around lake shores, in patches, or just scattered amongst other vegetation.

Identifying Characteristics:

- 1-3 feet tall
- Flower head has a prominent black/dark brown central cone that is surrounded by 8-20 bright yellow rays
- Flowers are usually 2-3 inches across
- Long, lanceolate leaves that are rough to the touch
- Rough stem with short, white hairs



The upper part of the stems is long and does not have leaves, each producing one composite flower. Each flower is about 2-3 inches across and does not have a noticeable scent. Blackeyed Susans bloom primarily from early to mid-summer for around a month, although some will bloom later in the summer and into the fall.


# Chicory:
## *Cichorium intybus*

Family: Asteraceae

Chicory is an invasive species from Eurasia that can be found all over Virginia. This plant prefers part shade/sun and can often be found along roadsides, disturbed sites, waste places, and various fields .

Identifying Characteristics:
- Tall plant with purple flowers
- When stem is broken, it secretes milky sap
- Rough hairs on leaves and stems
- Alternate leaf arrangement


Chicory has clusters of 1-4 soft, blue 1-2 inch flower heads that are widely spaced along mostly naked branches. Typically, these flowers have 17 rays, each with a blue stamen with deep blue fused anthers and a style with a split-tip. The tip of each ray has 5 small teeth (figs. 1 and 4).



The leaves of chicory are alternately arranged and are 3-10 inches long by ½-2¾ inches wide. They are roughly hairy on both surfaces, and the lower leaves are dandelion-like (oblanceolate) (fig. 2).

# Corn Speedwell:
## *Veronica arvensis*

Family: Plantaginaceae

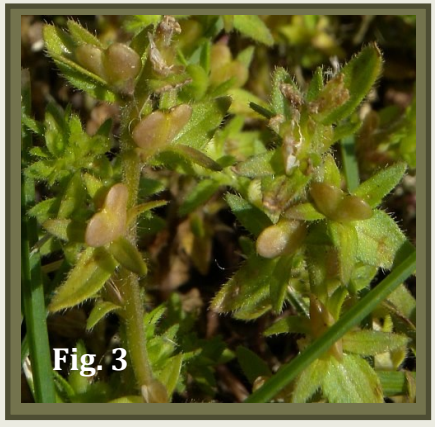
Corn speedwell is an invasive plant that can often be found in Virginia grasslands. It prefers part shade and sun and can commonly be found in disturbed soils, lawns, roadsides, and waste areas.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Upper leaves are smaller and more narrow than lower leaves
- Typically 4-6 inches tall, but can reach up to 14 inches (figs. 1 and 2)
- Hairs on the stem and leaves (figs. 1 and 4)
- Small, white, blue, or purple flowers in the leaf axils
- Seedling leaves are oppositely arranged, but leaves on flowering stalks are smaller and alternate



Corn speedwell is considered a very weedy plant, and one that blooms starting in May through September. The fruit is flat and heart-shaped and is about 1/8 inch across. It also has fine hairs around the edges of the fruit (fig. 3).




The flowers are tubular, 1/8 inch wide, with four rounded lobes. The upper 3 are slightly larger and the lower is slightly smaller. They're deep blue, violet, or white streaked with a light green center and two short, white stamens (fig. 4).

# Common Plantain:

Family: Plantaginaceae

Common plantain is a non-native forb that can be found around much of Virginia. It is commonly found in turfgrass with poor soil or compaction, as well as in pastures, ditches and around feed lots.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Grows in a basal rosette that hugs the ground (figs. 2, 3, and 4)
- Very visible veins that follow the curve of the leaf (fig. 1)
- Oval, ribbed, and short-stemmed leaves
- Pale green flowers grow on naked stalks that have a slender spike that is around 8 inches long (fig. 2)
- Similar look to *P. rugelli*, but lacks a purple petiole and has rounder seeds




The flowers of common plantain bloom from June-October and can be seen on the pencil-thin spike that shoots about 8-10 inches upward. Each plant will often have multiple flowering shoots growing in succession (fig. 2). These shoots also have distinguishable egg-shaped seed capsules with brown seeds, which is unlike other plantains in the area.

# Spiny Plumeless Thistle:
## *Carduus acanthoides*

Family: Asteraceae

Spiny plumeless thistle is an invasive species that is found in many of Virginia's grassland areas. This plant prefers environments with a lot of sun, especially in fields, pastures, roadsides, waste areas, and other disturbed soils.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Free-branching stems that grow 1-4 feet tall
- In the beginning of the lifecycle, leaves form a basal rosette
- The stems have leaf-line spines
- Leaves are alternately arranged and are sparsely hairy
- Has purple/pink flowers that are erect on the stem, solitary or in clusters of 2-5




Spiny plumeless thistle flowers are typically about an inch across and exist alone at the end of a straight peduncle. A big identifying characteristic of this species is the spiny bracts and the receptacle that is right around half of the length of the flower (fig. 1).

The leaves form a rosette at the base of the plant (fig. 2) and are alternately arranged going up the stem. The leaf margins are serrate or pinnately lobed and are typically smooth on the underside. These leaves can be around 4-8 inches long and up to 3 inches wide (figs. 1 and 2).

# Canada Thistle:
## *Cirsium arvense*

Family: Asteraceae

Canada thistle is an invasive species found throughout much of Virginia. This plant can most often be found in cultivated fields, pastures, rangelands, roadsides, waste places, and in other open grassland areas.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Oblong leaves with lobed and spiny edges
- Leaves are often dark green and smooth on the upper surface and light green and hairy on the bottom
- Has small lavender flower heads that have up to 100 tubular flowers
- 1-4 feet tall
- Canada thistles usually grow in groups or patches



The flower heads of this plant are produced either singly or in groups of 2 -5 at the ends of stems and axillary branches (fig. 1). The mature seeds are brown and about 3/16 inches long. Each has a plume of tan silky hairs attached to one end (fig. 3).

# Field Thistle:
## *Cirsium discolor*

Family: Asteraceae

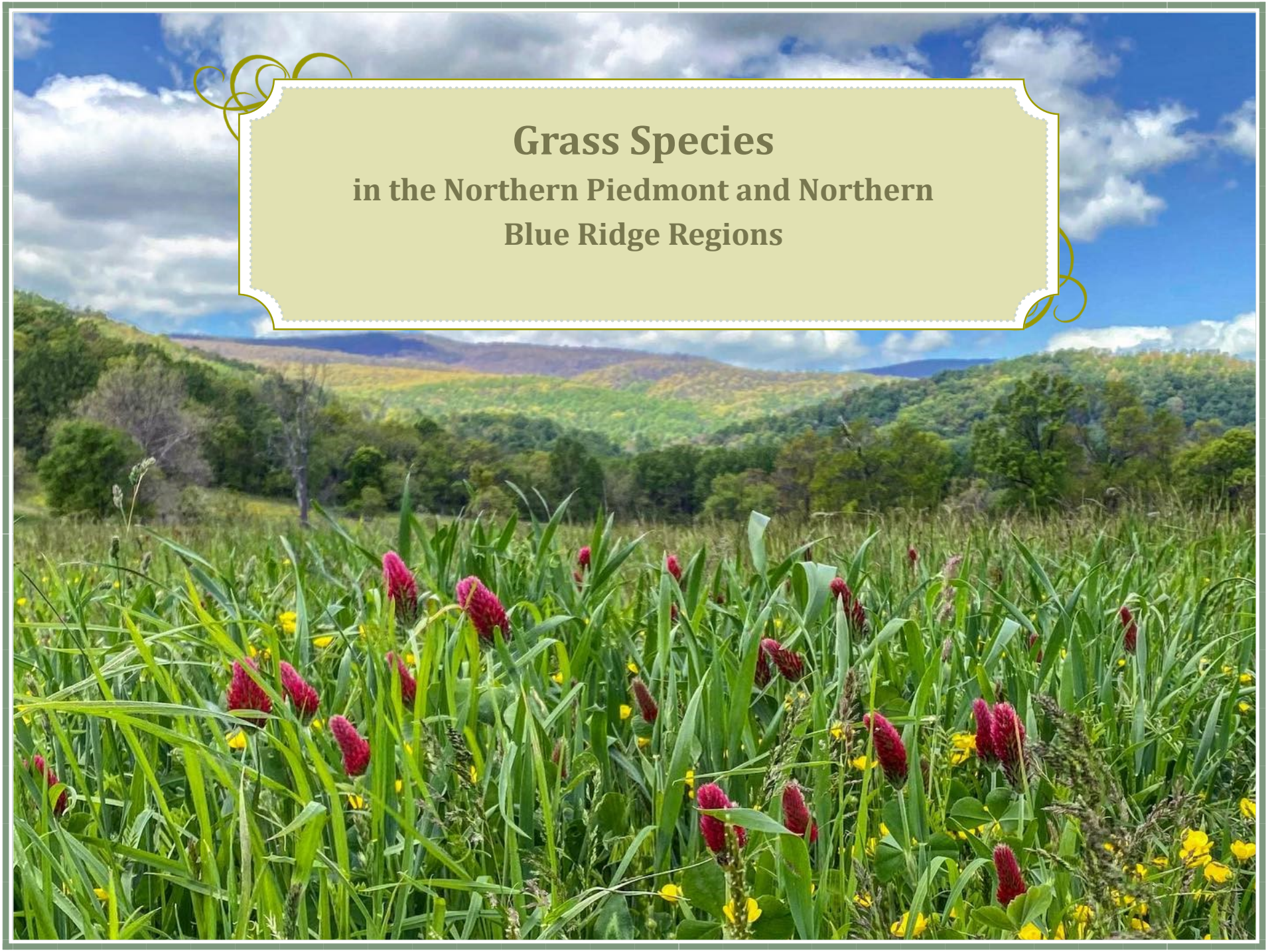
Field Thistle is a biennial herb that is native to the eastern half of the United States and Canada. It tolerates a variety of soil and weather conditions and can be found in pastures, forest edges, and roadsides.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Grows to be 2-8 feet tall (fig. 2)
- Leaves can be up to 9 inches long, are alternately arranged, have spiny, deep lobes, and are smooth on the top and hairy on the bottom surface
- Flower heads are around 2 inches wide and have many little, tube-shaped flowers (figs. 1 and 3)
- Base of the flower is light green and scaly with lots of sharp spines (fig. 3)




Field thistle can often be mistaken for other, non-native thistle species. Two ways to distinguish the different species are seen in the leaves—field thistle leaves have a white underside and deeply lobed edges (fig. 4).



# Grass Species

## in the Northern Piedmont and Northern Blue Ridge Regions

# Sedges, Rushes, and Grasses:

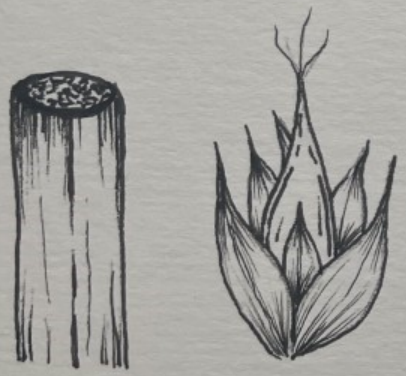

**Sedges** have triangular-round stems with a pithy center and have a single scale under each flower or seed.

**Rushes** have round stems with a pithy center and have six scales surrounding each flower or seed.

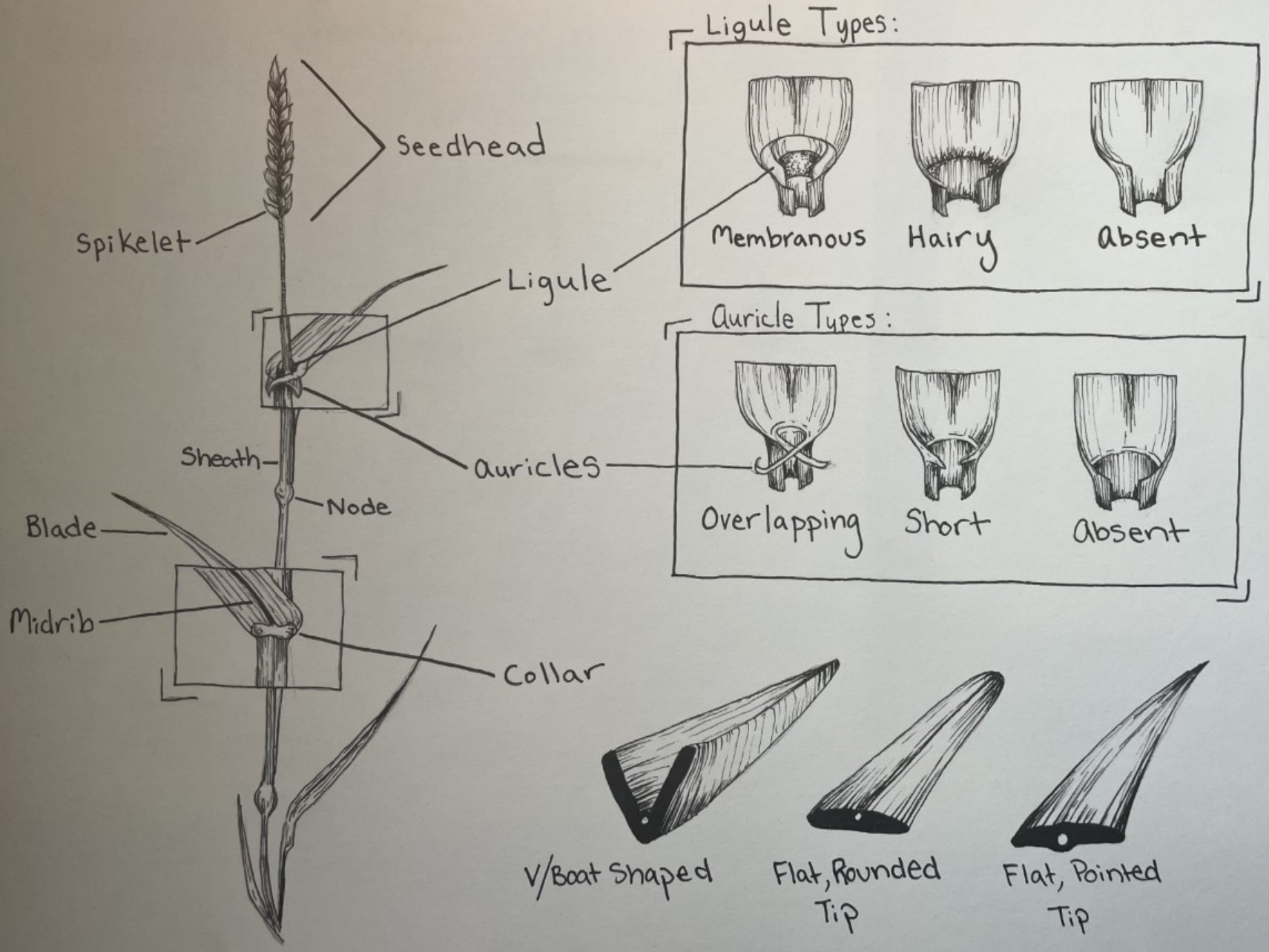
**Grasses** are round and hollow with nodes going up the stem. They also have two scales under each flower or seed.

To remember…

'Sedges have edges, rushes are round, grasses have knees that bend to the ground!'




# Identifying Parts of a Grass Plant:



# Tall Fescue:

## *Schedonorus arundinaceus*

Family: Poaceae

This grass is an invasive species. Through sowing and naturalization, it has taken over many parks, lawns, and other natural areas in Virginia.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Coarse textured, wide-bladed, grass that grows in bunches
- Pointed leaf tip (unlike kentucky bluegrass)
- Prominent veins throughout the blade
- Short auricle and barely visible ligule


Tall fescue seedhead (fig. 2) and leaf blade tip (pointed) (fig. 3 )



Tall fescue is a coarse grass with short, creeping rootstocks which grow in heavy clumps with stems from 2-5 feet tall. These clumps have thick roots that make it nearly impossible to pull them from the ground. Leaves are 4-5 inches long, smooth underneath, and rough above.


Basic auricle type, with small and short hairs on the edges (fig. 4).


Membranous, collar-like, ligule. Equal to or less than 0.02 inches long and very jagged (fig. 5).

# Kentucky Bluegrass:

## *Poa pratensis*

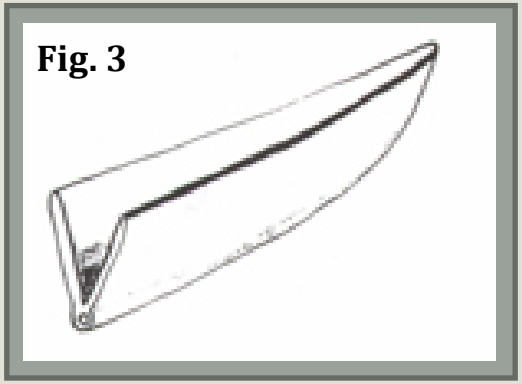
Family: Poaceae

Kentucky bluegrass is invasive to grassland areas in Virginia as it tends to outcompete and dominate other native grasses.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Boat-shaped leaf tip
- Prominent vein running up the middle of the blade
- One of the most common grasses in the US and VA.
- No auricles and short membranous ligule is present


Kentucky bluegrass seedhead is an open panicle. The spikelets are flat with 3-5 seeds in each.


Blades are boat shaped (fig. 3) - one major way to distinguish it from tall fescue which has a flat, pointed leaf tip. Figure 2 shows kentucky blue-grass after being mowed.


Has a membranous ligule that is very short and collar-like. About 0.008” - 0.04” long. This grass has no auricle.

# Orchardgrass:

## *Dactylis glomerata*

Family: Poaceae

Orchardgrass is not native to Virginia, though it can be found all over it and the rest of North America

Identifying Characteristics:

- Blueish-green color
- Bunch-type, cool season grass
- Flattened sheath
- Large and membranous ligule


Fig. 2


Fig. 3

Orchardgrass can grow to be almost 4 feet tall (fig. 2) and has a distinctive blue-green color which makes it stand out from most other grasses.


Fig. 1

Grass blades are 3 - 12 inches in length and 3-8 mm in width. Orchardgrass has no auricles, and has a large, 3-5 mm toothed membranous ligule (fig 4).


Fig. 4

# Sweet Vernalgrass:

## *Anthoxanthum odoratum*

Family: Poaceae

Sweet Vernalgrass is a nonnative grass species that can be found mostly along the east and west coasts. It tolerates a wide range of conditions but can most often be found with other weeds in disturbed soils, including roadsides, trail edges, weedy shores, and waste areas.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Brownish-yellow spikelets
- Distinctive sweet smell (said to smell like fresh-cut hay and vanilla)
- Early appearance relative to other grasses
- 10”-24” in height


Fig. 1

Sheaths are round and generally do not have hairs except close to the top. Sheaths are split and have overlapping margins that are almost transparent (hyaline). This grass can reach 2’ in height.

Fig. 2


Fig. 3

There is a spike-like panicle at the tip of the stem (fig. 2), around 1 to 5½ inches long. Spikelets are single at branchlet tips, around 3/8 inch long, slightly flattened, narrow lance-shaped with a pointed tip. Each spikelet has a single fertile floret flanked by a pair of sterile florets that are hidden by them.

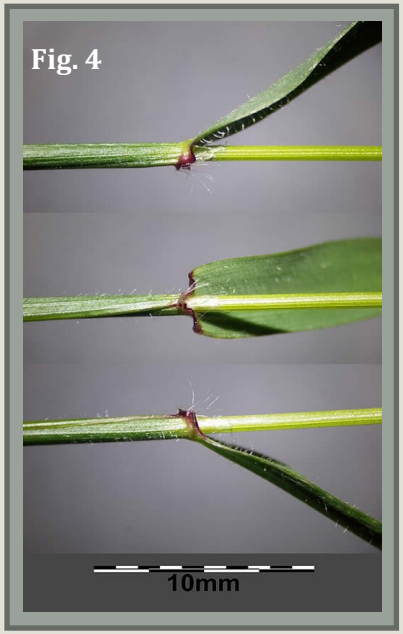


Fig. 4

Sweet Vernalgrass leaves are mostly basal, flat, hairless to sparsely hairy on both surfaces, often fringed with a few long white hairs near the base. Lower leaves can be up to 12 inches long, and 3/8 inches wide. Sheaths are hairless to sparsely hairy, often with a few long white hairs at the tip, and usually have a small auricle at the sheath apex. The membranous ligule is small (fig. 4).

# Purpletop Tridens :

## *Tridens flavus*

Family: Poaceae

Purpletop tridens is a native, perennial bunchgrass that thrives in sites receiving full sun to partial shade. It tolerates dry to moist sandy, sandy loam, loam, clay loam, or clay soils in areas that receive 30 or more inches of rain. Can most often be found in old fields, prairies, open woods, woodland openings, powerline and railroad rights-of-ways, and roadsides

Identifying Characteristics:

- Can grow from 3-5 feet tall
- Culm is green; Nodes on culm are greenish red
- Easiest to identify in late Summer, when the spikelets are dark purple
- Has a ligule of stiff hairs on either side of the leaf sheath at the collar


Fig. 1

The seedhead is an open panicle that is a dark purple (fig. 1). Individual spikelets are around 6 - 8 mm long, and 1 - 2 mm wide. These seedheads appear in mid-late Summer and continue into the Fall.


Fig. 2

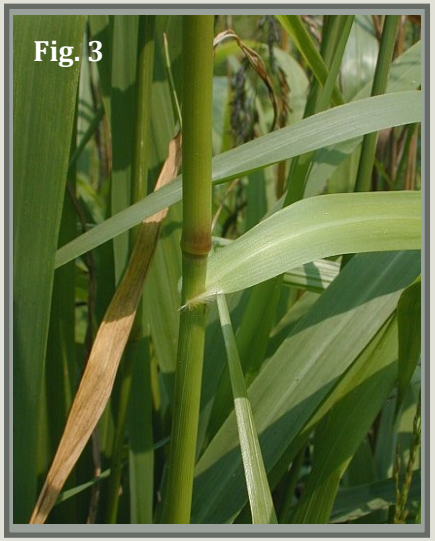


Fig. 3

The leaves of puprletop tridens have a relatively prominent white midvein and are somewhat flattened (fig. 2), but appear folded in the sheath. Leaves are 8 to 17 mm wide and are usually hairy except near the bases. They do not have auricles and have a ligule that is a fringe of hairs (fig. 3). Sheaths are round and are usually only hairy near the top.


Fig. 4

# Big Bluestem :

## *Andropogon gerardii*

Family: Poaceae

Big bluestem is a bunch grass that is native to Virginia. It thrives in partial shade with average to dry soil. Can often be found in plains, prairies, railroads, roadsides, and open woods.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Finger-like array of purple or yellow spikes at the tips of tall stems
- Can grow up to 2-7 feet tall
- Leaves are mostly flat and are green/blue-green
- For young leaves, big bluestem can be identified by the long hairs that are near the leaf base.




There are 2 - 6 finger-like spikes that are clustered at the top of each stem and the tips of any branches in the upper plant (fig. 3). Spikes are typically 2 - 4 inches long and are mostly ascending. These are purplish, and sometimes yellowish. The spikelets are in pairs all along the spike and the spikelet stalks are usually covered in densely –packed fine hairs that spread out as the spikelets mature.

The leaves of big bluestem grasses are crowded mostly on the lower stem with few in the upper plant. Leaves are mostly flat and are green to blue-green, up to 18 inches long and ½ inch wide (fig. 1). The upper surface of the leaf is rough and often has long, white, spreading hairs close to the base (fig. 4).

# Switchgrass:

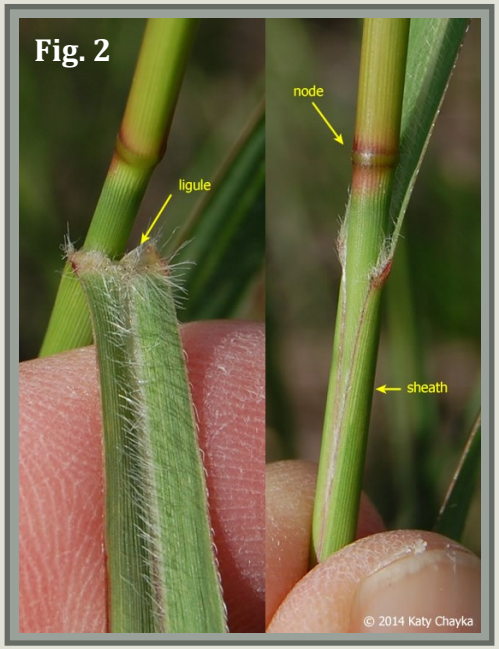
## *Panicum virgatum*

Family: Poaceae

Switchgrass is native to Virginia and much of eastern North America. It thrives in a wide range of soil types and environmental conditions and can often be mistaken for bluestem or Indiangrass.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Flowers in large, open panicles
- Hairy where the leaf attaches to the stem (distinctive from other warm season grasses)
- Grows around 3-6 feet tall
- Grows in tall clumps
- Look for hairless, awnless spikelets on wiry stalks


The seedhead is an open panicle around 15-20 inches long that comes out in late May and into June. The seedhead is a sort of pyramid shape, and the seeds start pinkish-purple but turn golden brown in the fall time.


Grows in large, tall clumps as seen in the figure above (fig. 3). The leaves are all alternate and ascend to droopy, 7-20 inch long and ¼ to ½ inch wide, flat blades. The leaves are hairless, except close to the base, which is often covered in hairs. Leaf edges are rough.

This grass has a hairy, membranous ligule and no present auricle (fig. 2).

# Nimblewill:

## *Muhlenbergia schreberi*

Family: Poaceae

Nimblewill is a warm-season, perennial grass that is found throughout the northeast, southeast, and Midwestern parts of the United States. It grows best in moist, shady areas, but can also be found in dry, sunny areas.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Often forms short, mat-like patches
- Tends to grow around cool-season grasses and can easily be distinguished by its course, gray-green leaves
- Has a seedhead with short awns
- Has a short, membranous ligule, but no auricle
- Leaf blades are relatively small, ranging from 3/4 to 3 inches long and 2 to 4 mm wide


Fig. 2

The short, narrow, and pointed leaves, mat-like appearance, and stolons are all features that distinguish nimblewill from other grass species. Nimblewill also does not tolerate cool weather and develops brown patches in the wintertime.

Fig. 1

Nimblewill can often be mistaken for bermudagrass, and the difference can be seen in the ligule. Nimblewill has a membranous ligule and sparse hairs, while bermudagrass has a hairy ligule and is usually very hairy.

Nimblewill seedheads are small with upward awns (fig. 3).

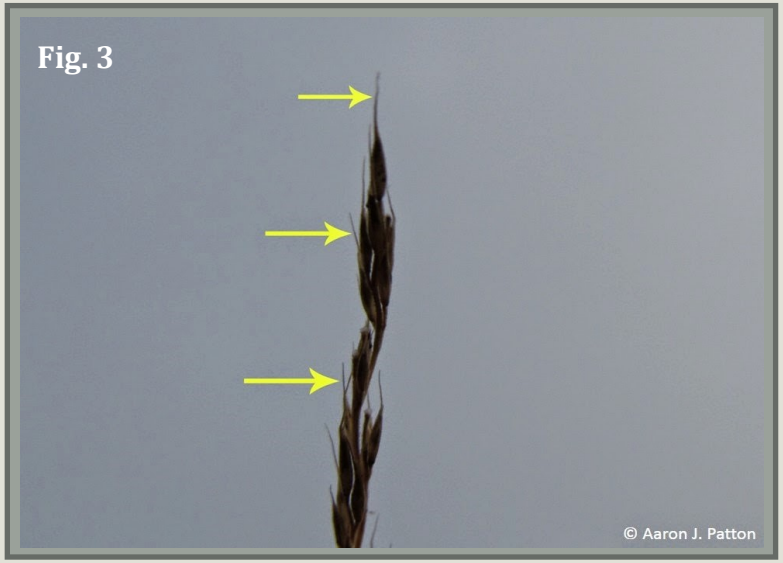


Fig. 3

# Stiltgrass:

## *Microstegium vimineum*

Family: Poaceae

Nepalese browntop is an invasive grass that has taken over much of the eastern United States. This grass typically can be found on stream banks, river bluffs, floodplains, emergent and forested wetlands, moist woodlands, early successional fields, uplands, thickets, roadside ditches, gas and power line corridors, and home lawns and gardens.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Has thin, pale green, and lance-shaped blades that are about 3 inches long
- Has a silvery stripe of hairs down the middle of the upper surface of the leaf
- Nepalese browntop seedheads are erect, thin, and spike-like racemes (fig. 2)
- Has a membranous ligule and no auricle


This grass can grow anywhere between 1/2 –3 feet tall. Its leaves are a pale green color, are alternately arranged with flat blades, and are hairy on both surfaces along the margins. The blades typically measure 2-4 inches long and 1/4-3/4 inches wide. Note the characteristic whitish mid-vein running down the blade (fig. 1).



# Indian Grass:

## *Sorghastrum nutans*

Family: Poaceae

Indian grass is a native, perennial bunchgrass with flowering stalks that can grow 2–7 feet tall. Can most often be found in upland prairies, glades, savannas, openings of dry upland forests, old fields, pastures, roadsides, railroads, and dry, open, disturbed areas.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Leaf blades up to 2 feet long
- Mature seed heads are dense, golden, and plumelike, with bent awns protruding from the florets
- Has a white, membranous ligule and an auricle that is as long as or longer than the ligule (fig. 2)
- Nodes are covered in short hairs

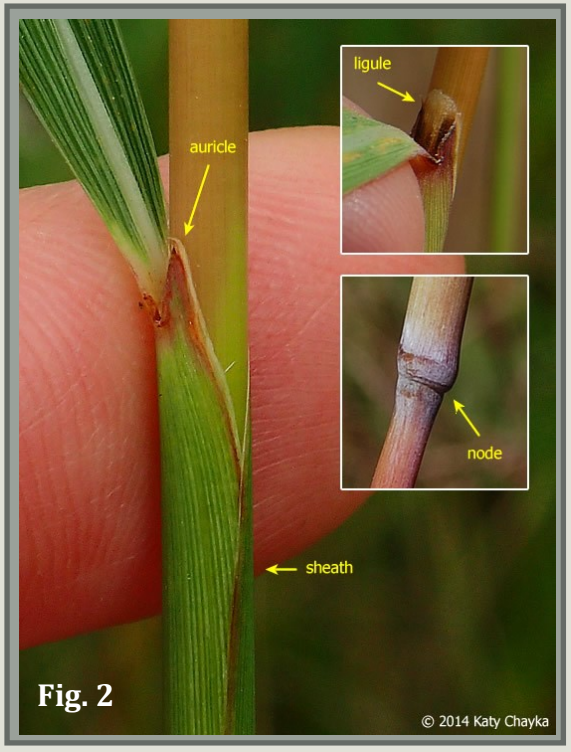


Fig. 2


Fig. 3

The leaves are alternate and are either erect to slightly flopping, 2 -24 inches long and up to ½ inch wide. Blades are mostly flat and rough-textured on both top and bottom and around the edges. The midvein is prominent and white near the base (fig. 2).


Fig. 1

Branches will usually become more erect as the fruit develops. Each seed is oval-elliptic, 2 to 3 mm long, smooth, and golden (figs. 1 and 3). The awns twist in the lower third of the seed head. Once mature, the spikelet will fall off to spread the seed.


Fig. 4

# Timothy:

## *Phleum pratense*

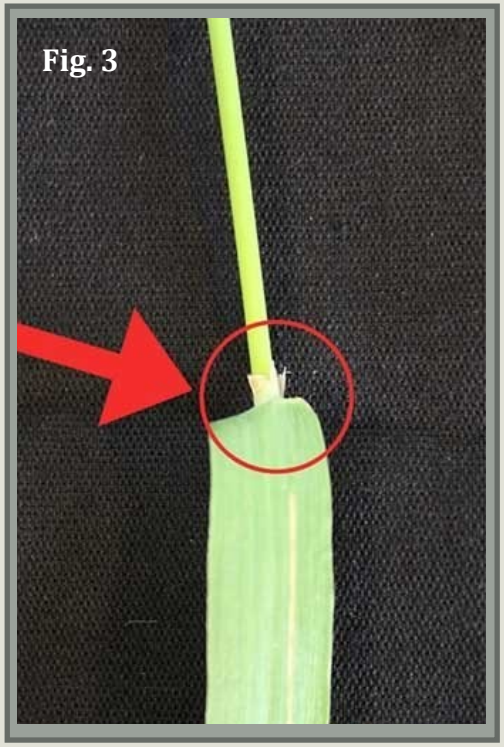
Family: Poaceae

Timothy is a cool-season, perennial, bunchgrass. It is not invasive but is a non-native and short-lived grass that thrives in cool and moist areas. Can often be found in fields, pastures, disturbed meadows, fence rows in open areas, vacant lots, powerline clearances, roadsides, grassy embankments, upper slopes of drainage canals, and waste areas.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Has a bulblike base that form corms (underground, solid, and swollen stem base that acts as storage tissue ) (fig. 4)
- 5-10 cm long seedhead with spikelets—no awns
- Membranous ligule that is toothed at the corners, and no auricle (fig. 3)
- Blades start off flat and then form into sharp points on the ends


Timothy grass is 2–3½ feet tall and produces either solitary or small tufted culms. Each culm is a light green color, unbranched, and erect; the nodes of each culm are slightly swollen. There are around 3-6 alternate leaves along each culm. Blades are around 9 inches long, are dull green to grayish blue, hairless, flat, and linear in shape. The leaf margins are rough in texture. This grass can sometimes be mistaken for foxtail grass, but to differentiate the two look at the awns. Timothy has no awns (fig. 1) and foxtail does.


# Broomsedge Bluestem:

## *Andropogon virginicus*

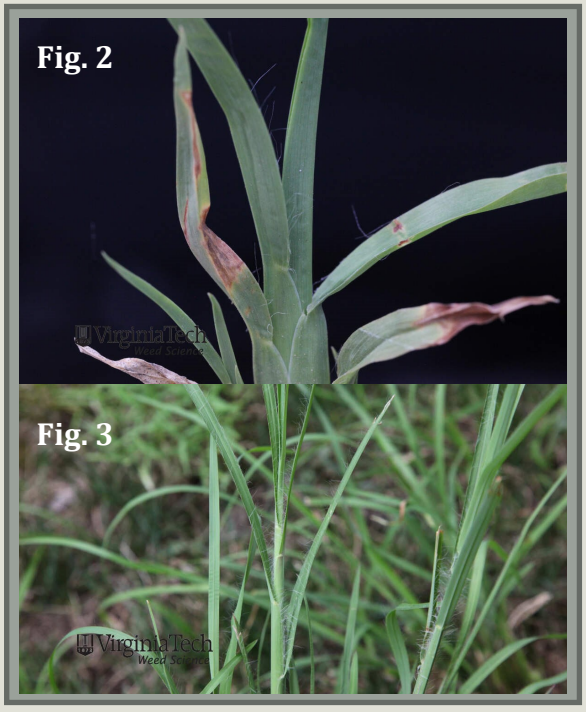
Family: Poaceae

Broomsedge bluestem is a native, warm-season grass that thrives in areas with full sun, dry conditions, and soil containing clay, sand, gravel, or rocky material. Can often be found in hill prairies, upland sand prairies, upland clay prairies, upland savannas, upland sandy savannas, rocky glades, sandy or gravelly areas along railroads, pastures, abandoned sandy fields, open areas of parks, mined land, and barren waste areas.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Stems are flat and branch close to the top of the plant (fig. 2)
- Fringe of hair at the nodes of the upper part of the plant
- Membranous ligule with no auricle
- Blades are folded at the base and are sharply pointed at the tips
- Seedhead has racemes with flowers in groups of 2-4—these have soft white hairs


The seeds are elongated with one rounded end and the other pointed. They are covered by a lemma with attached fluffy, white hairs (fig. 1). This grass grows in late spring/early summer and flowers from summer-early autumn.





Broomsedge bluestem can sometimes be mistaken for little bluestem. The difference is that broomsedge shoots are more yellow, and at maturity, Broomsedge is golden, not reddish like little bluestem (figs. 1 and 5).

# Marsh Bristlegrass:

## *Setaria parviflora*

Family: Poaceae

Marsh bristlegrass is a native grass species found in the United States. It most often can be found in cultivated areas, fields, pastures, lawns, turf, roadsides, railroad beds, and waste areas.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Alternate leaf arrangement
- Small hairs on lower surface of leaf
- Membranous ligule and no auricle
- Smooth stems (figs. 1 and 4)
- Seedheads are a cylindrical panicle and are purple or yellow
- Each spikelet has 4-12 bristles that are about 0.1-0.5 inches long


Fig. 1


Fig. 2


Fig. 3

This grass will grow from around late March-early April until the fall time. It is a distinctive whitish-green as seen in figure 2. The base of the grass is slender and a bit wiry.

The leaf blades are about 0.1-0.4 inches wide and 2 1/4-10 inches long (fig. 2). The upper part of the blade near the stem can often be hairy and has a prominent midrib. The leaf sheaths are keeled, hairless, and rounded. The membranous ligule is a fringe of short hair (fig. 4).


Fig. 4

# Poverty Rush:

## *Juncus tenuis*

Family: Juncaceae

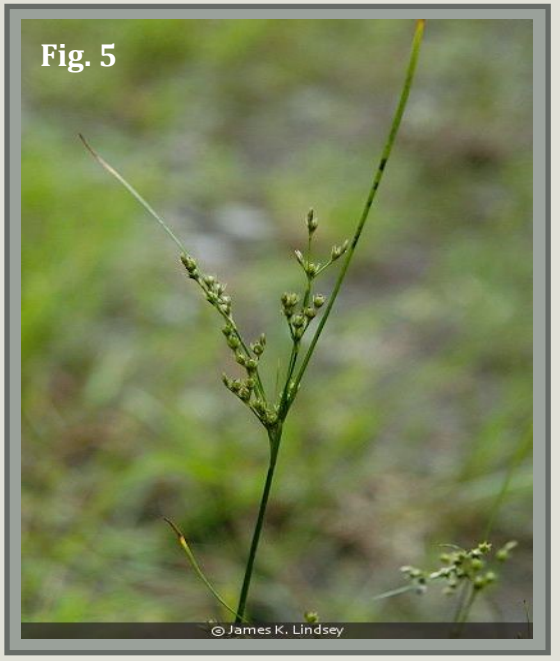
Poverty rush is a native grass found in Virginia and the rest of the United States. It can tolerate most conditions and is often found along paths, in gravel or stone driveways, near roads, in pastures, meadows, and waste places.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Can grow 6-20 inches tall (fig. 3)
- Hollow stems
- Leaf-like bracts that extend beyond the flowering cluster (figs. 4 and 5)
- Small, greenish brown flowers that are produced in clusters at the end of the stems (fig. 3)
- No ligule, but has a papery ear-like auricle (fig. 2)
- No hairs




The leaves are 1-5 inches long and up to 1mm wide. The sheath is open at the front (fig. 4). At the tip of the sheath is a pair of narrowly triangular auricles that are 2-5 mm long, thin and papery, and are whitish brown (fig. 2).

# Little Bluestem:

## *Schizachyrium scoparium var. scoparium*

Family: Poaceae

Little bluestem is a native grass to the United States, and prefers to grow in part shade/sun; average to dry, sandy soil. Most often, this grass can be found in prairies, dunes, roadsides, railroads, and open woods.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Grows in a tight bunch (figs. 3 and 4)
- The stem base is flat
- Leaves are folded at the bottom
- Alternate leaves along the lower half of each culm
- Blades can be up to 10 inches long
- Membranous ligule and no auricle

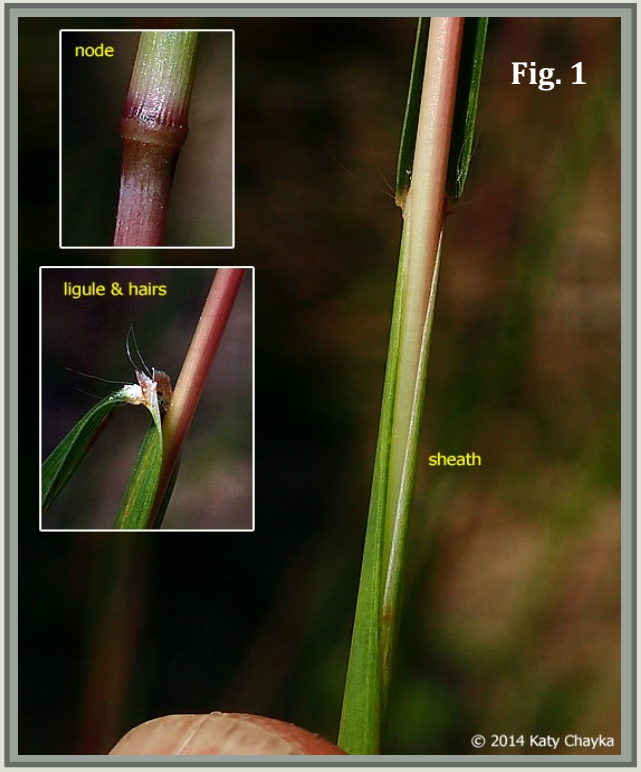


Fig. 1


Fig. 2

The leaves are crowded on the lower portion of the stem with few on the upper part. Leaves are either flat or folded lengthwise, green to blue-green, and are up to 10 inches long and about ¼ inch wide. Sometimes the leaves can be finely hairy, but they are usually hairless except for near the base.

Fig. 3

At the tip of each branch and the top of the stem, there are single spike-like clusters. Spikes are 1-3 inches long, ascending to erect, and are typically purple.

Fig. 4

# Deertongue:

## *Dichanthelium clandestinum*

Family: Poaceae

Deertongue is a species of warm-season grass that is native to the eastern United States and Canada. It is primarily a weed of pastures and hayfields within the mountainous and piedmont regions of the southeastern United States.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Wide leaves compared to most other grasses (around 1/2 -1 1/4 inches wide)
- Prostrate (close to ground) growth habit
- Panicle seedhead (fig. 3)
- Membranous and hairy ligule; no auricle (fig. 2)
- Alternate leaves along the culm (fig. 4)


Fig. 1


Fig. 2


Fig. 3

The leaves are around 1/2 -1 1/4 inches wide and 4-8 inches long (figs. 1 and 4). In autumn, the culms form a very leafy rosette that is 4-6 inches tall.

The seedhead is a panicle that is typically 3 1/2 -5 1/2 inches long and 2 1/2 - 1/2 inches across (fig. 3).


Fig. 4

# Beaked Panicgrass:

## *Coleataenia anceps*

Family: Poaceae

Beaked panicgrass is a native, warm-season species of grass in Virginia. It can commonly be found in fields, clearings, roadsides, and other open, disturbed habitats. It can also sometimes be seen in alluvial swamps, depression swamps and ponds, river shores and bars, and moist to dry woodlands.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Alternate leaf arrangement
- Flat and smooth, elongated leaf blades 9figs. 2 and 4)
- Spikelets are unevenly positioned on the seedhead (fig. 1)
- Membranous and irregularly shaped ligule;  no auricle (fig. 3)


Fig. 1


Fig. 2


Fig. 3

The first glume of the spikelet is angled sharply and makes up most of the base of the spikelet, and the second glume is the length of the spikelet and curved like a bird's beak (fig. 1), hence the name beaked panicgrass.


Fig. 4

# Bermudagrass:

## *Cynodon dactylon*

Family: Poaceae

Bermudagrass is an invasive grass species from western Africa. It was introduced as a pasture grass, and it grows best in hot dry climates typical of the southern United States.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Leaves are gray-green to blue-green (figs. 1 and 4)
- Blades are typically 2-8 inches long and 2-5 mm wide (fig. 1)
- The collar has long hairs
- Ligule is hairy ; no auricle
- Seedheads have 3-7 long finger-like spikes (figs. 3 and 4)



Bermudagrass and Nimblewill grass can often get mistaken for each other, as their shape is quite similar. The way to tell the difference is by looking at the ligule—bermudagrass has a very hairy ligule (fig. 2), while nimblewill has a membranous ligule.

Bermudagrass has blue-green blades and will form large patches in lawns as it spreads from rhizomes and stolons once it becomes established (fig. 5). The stolons can usually be spotted easily as they spread over sidewalks and roadways.



# Johnsongrass:

## *Sorghum halepense*

Family: Poaceae

Johnsongrass is an invasive, warm-season species that can be found in Virginia. This grass prefers rich soils and it does not tolerate close mowing. It grows in cultivated, reduced-tillage, and perennial fields.

Identifying Characteristics:

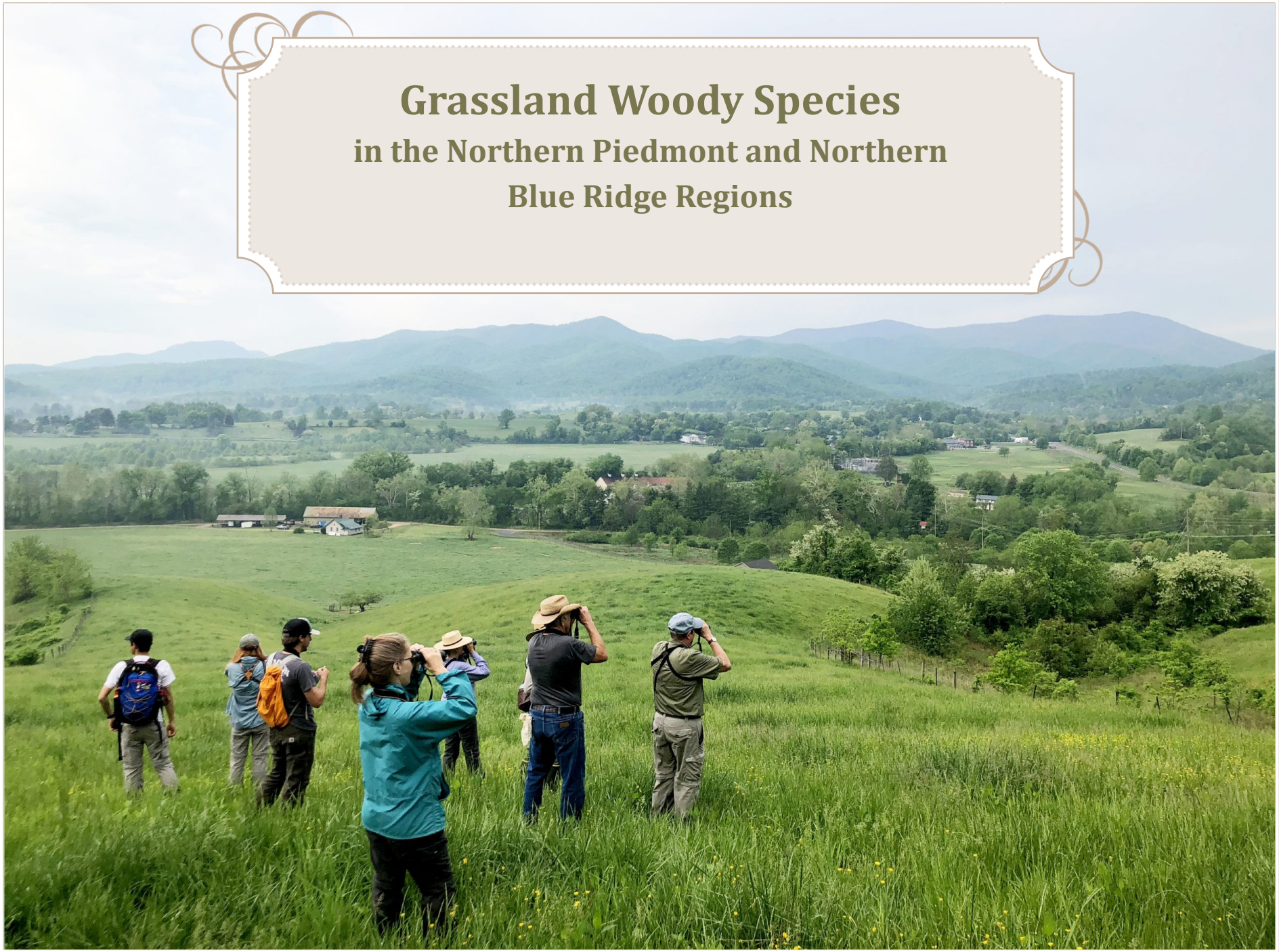
- Can grow up to 7 feet tall
- Grows in clumps (figs. 1 and 2)
- Leaf blades can be anywhere from 8-24 inches long and 10-30 mm wide
- Has a prominent, white midvein (fig. 5)
- Seedhead is an open panicle that forms a pyramid shape (fig. 3)




Johnsongrass can easily be mistaken for barnyard grass and fall panicum, especially before seedhead formation. The best way to make the distinction between these grasses is to look at the ligule. Johnsongrass has a membranous ligule, unlike the others (fig. 4).


# Grassland Woody Species

## in the Northern Piedmont and Northern Blue Ridge Regions



# Coralberry:

## *Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*


Fig. 1

Family: Caprifoliaceae

Coralberry is a woody plant that is native to North America. It can most often be found within openings and borders of thin rocky woodlands, areas along woodland paths, powerline clearances in wooded areas, thickets, and limestone glades.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Grows to be around 2-4 feet tall
- The trunk and lower branches are brown, woody, and covered with strips of loose shaggy bark (fig. 3)
- The middle and upper branches are reddish-brown and are often hairy (fig. 1)
- 2" long and 1.25" wide leaves that are oval-ovate, opposite, and smooth (fig. 2)
- Has 1/4 inch long, ovate, reddish-purple berries (fig. 1)


Fig. 2

The opposite leaf blades can be up to 2 inches long and 1¼ inch wide. They are oval-ovate and smooth. The upper surface of each leaf blade is a medium green color and is hairless. Each leaf has a short petiole that is about ¼ inch long. The leaf venation is pinnate.

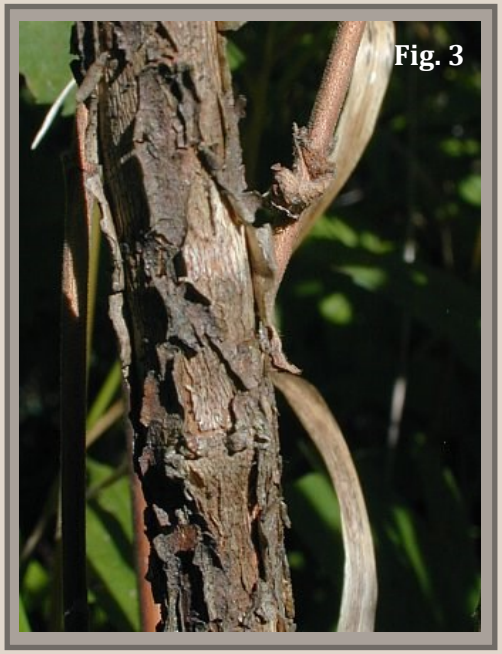


Fig. 3

Their small, ovate purple berries can easily be identified in the Fall time (fig. 1). It is a relatively small sprawling shrub and has brownish -gray strips of loose and shaggy bark (fig. 3).

# Japanese Honeysuckle:

## *Lonicera japonica*

Family: Caprifoliaceae

Japanese honeysuckle is an easily recognizable, and very invasive plant that has grown all over the eastern and southwest United States. It is well adapted to a wide range of habitat types and can thrive in both shade and full sun.

Identifying Characteristics:

- A climbing or sprawling, semi-evergreen woody vine that will often keep its leaves into the wintertime
- Opposite, ovate to oblong-ovate leaves; about 1-3 in. long by ½-1½ in. wide
- The flowers are bi-lobed, white-yellow, highly fragrant, and with nectar
- In VA these flowers are produced in June
- The stems are flexible, hairy, and a pale reddish-brown (fig. 2)
- Woody parts of stems have yellowish-brown bark that shreds into long papery strips


Fig. 1

The flowers are white or pink and turn yellow with age. They are ½ to 1½ inches long and are tubular with two lips: upper lip with 4 lobes, lower lip with 1 lobe (fig. 1).


Fig. 2

Young leaves produced in the spring are often highly lobed, and those that have grown into the Summer are unlobed as shown in figures 1 and 2.


Fig. 3

A climbing and sprawling, woody vine that can spreadу up to 20 feet.

# Eastern Poison Ivy:

## *Toxicodendron radicans*

Family: Anacardiaceae

Eastern poison ivy is an aggressive native plant that can be found throughout all of Virginia. They can most often be found in wooded areas, thickets, roadsides, clearings, fence rows, and meadows .

Identifying Characteristics:

- Has three compound, alternate, ovate leaves—3-6 inches long and 1-3 inches wide
- When growing as a woody shrub it can reach up to 6 feet; when growing as a vine, it can reach 60 -150 feet tall
- Often found climbing up trees, walls, and fences or trailing along the ground


Eastern Poison Ivy has compound leaflets that are in groups of three—the middle leaf being longer than the outer two. Leaves are bright green in the Spring and Summer, and turn red or reddish-yellow in the Fall. It likes to hide with other groundcover vegetation, as can be seen in figure 3 with the surrounding ferns.


Poison ivy will climb up trees and other tall structures, leaving a thick, woody vine with wiry hairs. Although these may look dead, they still carry the toxic oil, urushiol (fig. 1).

# Blackberry:

## *Rubus ssp.*

Family: Rosaceae

There are many types of Rubus to be found in Virginia, and all of them are edible. The shrub has arching canes that can reach 3-5 feet high, and often form dense, tangled thickets.

Identifying Characteristics:

- Leaves are alternate, palmately compound, and 3-5 inches long and wide
- 3-5 leaflets that have serrated margins and small prickles on the petiole
- Purplish-red arching canes with large prickles
- Blackberry is a multiple fruit composed of 20-50 small fruitlets


Fig. 1


Fig. 2

Fruit are dark red, turn black when mature, and are thimble-shaped (fig. 1). Plant can either be a vine or a shrub with trailing/arching stems that are nearly always thorny.

The leaves are alternate, trifoliate or pinnately compound, and have 3, 5, 7 or 9 deeply serrated or toothed leaflets (figs. 2,3, and 4).

Blackberries can be mistaken for dewberries which often have smaller berries than blackberries.

Blackberries also produce tall canes, while dewberries are a trailing bramble that rarely exceeds two feet in height.


Fig. 3


Fig. 4

# Allegheny Blackberry:

## *Rubus allegheniensis*

Family: Rosaceae

Allegheny blackberry, or common blackberry, is an erect shrub, the branches of which can reach up to 8 feet and either arch high or are supported by surrounding trees or shrubs. This plant prefers light shade to full sun, and can often be found along woodlands, thickets, open woodlands, savannas, woodland meadows, limestone glades, fence rows, areas along roadsides and railroads, and abandoned pastures

Identifying Characteristics:

- 3-8 foot canes that are green where there is new growth, but become reddish-brown with age
- Canes have little hairs and sharp prickles (figs. 2,3,4)
- Each cane develops racemes with about 12 small, white flowers (fig. 4)
- The leaves are alternate and compound with 3–5 leaflets
- Will flower from April-June and fruit from June-August





The fruit is dark red, turns black when mature, and is thimble-shaped (fig. 2). The plant can either be a vine or a shrub with trailing/arching stems that are nearly always thorny.

The leaves are alternate, trifoliate, or pinnately compound, and have 3, 5, 7, or 9 deeply serrated or toothed leaflets (figs. 2,3, and 4).

leaflets are 2½–4 inches long, egg-shaped, and the edges are coarsely toothed. They are medium green above, paler below (fig. 2).

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