SMILAX HERBACEA L. var. PULVERULENTA (Michx.) Gray
Downy Carrion-flower

FAMILY: Liliaceae

SYNONYM: Smilax pulverulenta Michx.

HABIT: Herbaceous annual, usually high-climbing by tendrils; flowering late April-early June; fruiting July, August.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Smilax herbacea var. pulverulenta is similar to the typical variety and to var. lasioneura. The var. pulverulenta has leaves green beneath; umbels hemispheric, and berries black, not glaucous. The var. herbacea and var. lasioneura have leaves pale or glaucous beneath; umbels crowded, becoming globose; and berries glaucous.

TOTAL RANGE: RI to s. NY, n. NJ, PA, OH, IN, IL, and MN, s. to VA, n. GA, TN, AR, and MO.

STATE RANGE: There are post-1960 specimens only from Highland and Wood counties. Pre-1960 occurrences are documented from Clark, Hardin, Licking, Lorain, Lucas, Ottawa, and Union counties. Braun (1967) reports it from Columbiana, Erie, Huron, and Lawrence counties.

STATE STATUS: 1980 to present: Endangered.

HABITAT: In moist to dry, usually calcareous soil of open woods, thickets, and roadsides.

HAZARDS: Unknown, but possibly overgrowth by woody species as a result of succession.

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: Unknown, but presumed good since it appears able to colonize disturbed habitats.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: This species can be identified in vegetative condition, but mature flowering material is preferred.

COMMENTS: Smilax herbacea var. pulverulenta may be more frequent in Ohio than current records indicate. It could easily be misidentified. Mangaly (1968) states that most morphological characters of this taxon are extremely variable in relation to ecological and climatic variations. It should be sought in areas of the appropriate habitat throughout the state, especially the western half.

SELECTED REFERENCES:

Braun, E.L. 1967. The Monocotyledoneae of Ohio: Cat-tails to orchids. The Ohio State Univ. Press, Columbus, OH. 464 p.

Mangaly, J.K. 1968. A cytotaxonomic study of the herbaceous species of Smilax: section Coprosmanthus. Rhodora 70: 55-82, 247-273.

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