

August 2012 Guess that Plant



The August 2012 *Guess that Plant* was

Elymus hystrix* L. var. *hystrix
Eastern bottle brush grass

The August *Guess that Plant* was one of New Jersey's interesting native woodland grass species, the eastern bottle brush grass, *Elymus hystrix* L. Most of the regional manuals published mid-20th century (Gleason & Cronquist; Fernald) list eastern bottle brush grass within its own genus, *Hystrix*. The recent Flora of North America Volume 24: 239pp. (2007) identifies a rationale for moving species within *Hystrix* into *Elymus*. Modern cladistics, various taxonomic traditions and lack of specific treatment for this group of grasses provides the impetus to move the plant into the larger genus *Elymus*, the rye grasses.

Eastern bottle brush grass prefers rich upland soils under deciduous woodland within the Valley and Ridge, Highlands, Piedmont, and Inner Coastal Plain Physiographic provinces. It is very distinctive when seen as a back lit silhouette. It is unmistakable. The plant is a warm season cespitose perennial with large spikelets. The large endosperm, its woodland habitat and time of maturation makes the seeds a likely food for small woodland mammals and grain eating migrating birds.