

## 2015 January *Guess that Plant*



*Eragrostis spectabilis* (Pursh) Steud. Purple Love-grass

The January *Guess that Plant* was the native grass purple love grass. Its reddish purple hue provided by the crimson tinged panicle branches is the easiest way to see this plant in its natural habitat. None of New Jersey's love grasses occupies wetlands and this plant exemplifies this with its xeric, old-field preferences. The plant is caespitose or clump forming, and appears midsummer, flowering in late August and September, providing its purple colored panicle in autumn. A species with a similar appearance occupies the same habitats, *Leptoloma cognatum*, fall witch grass. Distinguishing Panicoid characters such as single spikelet at the terminal end of the panicle branches differs from Purple love grass, which produces characteristic compressed spikelets composed of multiple overlapping florets.

Mary Hough's Wild Plants of New Jersey (1983) identifies collections from every county with the exception of the northeastern Piedmont counties of Bergen, Passaic, Hudson, Morris, Essex, and Union.

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