

## November 2016 Plant of the Month



*Mikania scandens* (L.) Willd., Climbing Hempweed, Climbing Hempvine, or Climbing Bonset

*Plant of the Month* for November another native fall flowering composite. These species have been selected to show the large diversity of autumn blooming Asteraceae New Jersey possesses. *Mikania* is a monotypic genus in the Northeast, and the only species in our is *scandens*. There are two varieties based on the texture of the leaves: smooth or hairy. Climbing hempweed is a common sight climbing over shrubs and other perennials from August until first frost in open wet meadows and freshwater marshes. The clusters of white perfect composite flowers are similar to *Eupatorium*.

It is found throughout Northeast North America, and its distribution in New Jersey is Statewide with the exception of the central Pine Barrens. Our plants are variety *scandens* (smooth) in freshwater marshes and variety *pubescens* (hairy) along the Atlantic Coastal edge. Mary Hough (1983) identifies specimens exist in the Chrysler Herbarium for every county except Cumberland and Passaic. The photos used for this month's posting are from populations along the Maurice River, Cumberland County providing documentation for its presence in that county. Witmer Stone (1910) records this widespread native as *Willugbaeya scandens* and as being frequent in "sandy swamps of the Middle, Coast and Cape May districts."

No other native, perennial New Jersey Asteraceae has the twining habit of *Mikania scandens*. This plant more resembles our *Clematis* species or climbing smartweeds, both of which our species is often intermingled. No records of its use by Native Americans exist specifically for *Mikania scandens*, but its southern relative *Mikania batatifolia*, now lumped with *M. scandens* (USDA, 2016) was used as a dermatological aid used for itchy skin also known as snake sickness (Moerman, 1999).