

## March 2020 Plant of the Month



*Cinna arundinacea* L. Woodreed

As the winter wanes and the spring slowly awakens our sleeping flora, the last vestiges of the 2019 growing season are still visible as plant skeletons. Our March 2020 Plant of the Month is such a plant. Our selection this month was based on those plants we still see on the landscape after the rigors of a Northeast winter. Woodreed, *Cinna arundinacea*, is a grass found throughout the State (Hough, 1983) and is widely distributed throughout the eastern forests (USDA, 2020). Woodreed is a forest species, and one of the few true woodland grasses that do not thrive without a forest canopy. Its position on the hydrologic gradient identifies this grass as a wetland species (FACW), although it may be present on mesic loamy soils of rich woodlands.

The genus *Cinna* has three species in North America. One is restricted to the central mountains of California (*C. borlanderi*). The other two species are found in the eastern forests. *Cinna arundinacea* is widespread, and our most common woodreed. Its associate, *Cinna latifolia* is a more restricted species, specifically in New Jersey. Mary Hough (1983) and USDA Plants Database identifies Sussex and Passaic counties as New Jersey's *Cinna latifolia* habitat.

Grasses have been used for food, fiber, and fuel since the dawn of humanity. Their wild collected seeds provided starchy grains, and their leaves soft tissue for weaving mats and baskets. Ethnological records for its use, primarily by many eastern Native Americans, identify a number of generalized uses for food and fiber. Native Americans may not have differentiated this grass from the similar woodland species found in the North East, but made use of the resource none the less.