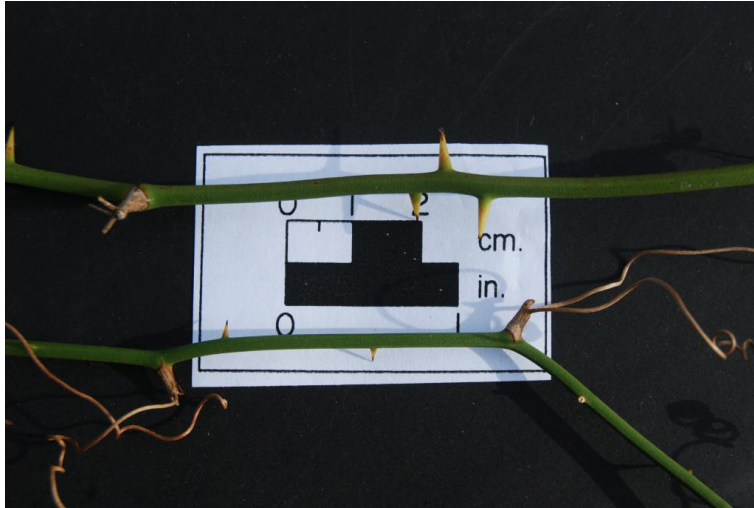


2021 January *Guess that Plant*



Smilax rotundifolia L., Bull or Green Briar

The January 2021 *Guess that Plant* was the native green briar known to all that are familiar to those that enter the forest. Anyone who has tried to enter a wetland edge or cross a forest to open field boundary has no doubt encountered our monthly species. This plant is a member of its own family, the Smilacaceae. These plants were once within the greater Liliaceae, yet modern taxonomy identifies the group as its own separate family.

Green or bull briar is a plant that tolerates shade yet will thrive in open sun when a forest canopy is disturbed. Thick layers of intertwined stems create near impassable boundaries along many wetland edges, creating a zone that is often associated with the wetland boundary. It has large, leathery, glossy leaves that differentiate it from its often intermixed *Smilax glauca*. Both form edible sprouts in the spring, and both were used for forage by Native Americans prior to the establishment of other tender spring crops. This plant is distributed statewide, and can be easily found along field and stream boundaries. Look for the bright green stems and its formidable prickles. One step in and you will know the reason they call the plant bull briar!

JRA 12/2020