

September 2022 Plant of the Month



Sanicula canadensis L.; Canada Black Snakeroot

The *Plant of the Month* for September is a native herb often hidden in the understory of our deciduous forests. The monthly plant, Canada Black Snakeroot, is found throughout the State outside of the Pine Barrens. It is a biennial in the Carrot Family, the Apiaceae. It is found in moist, rich woodlands. The plant is an upland species commonly associated with the rich forest of the Inner Coastal Plain, Piedmont and northern Physiographic provinces. Hough (1983) shows it as a species with herbarium vouchers for Piedmont counties Mercer, Somerset, Middlesex, and Hunterdon. Coastal Plain vouchers exist for Ocean, Monmouth, Camden and Atlantic Counties. The photo above captures *Sanicula canadensis* in Grenloch, Gloucester County.

Canada black snakeroot is one of four *Sanicula* species present in New Jersey. *Sanicula marilandica*, the common Black Snakeroot is the most widespread. It is separated from the *Plant of the Month* by the exerted style for *S. marilandica*, and style within the fruit's bristle for the *S. canadensis*. *Sanicula gregaria* has a distribution similar to our *Plant of the Month*, and is differentiated by its yellow flower when in bloom. The fourth species is *Sanicular trifoliata*. This is a rare plant confined to the rocky woods of Hunterdon and Mercer Counties.

Native Americans used New Jersey's members of the genus for a variety of medicinal applications. Canada Black Snakeroot had uses for gynecological aids. A decoction of dried *Sanicula marilandica* root was used to induce vomiting (Moerman, 1998). The *Plant of the Month* flowered in July and August. Its flora display will be gone, but the plant and fruits will be present until the first frost.