

August 2023 Plant of the Month



Ipomoea lacunosa L., White Morning-glory

The August Plant of the Month is a native vine infrequently seen on the Coastal Plain. White Morning-glory is a member of the Morning Glory family, Convolvulaceae. The species is annual, native, and often found in wetlands, floodplains and other moist disturbed habitats. Its wetland classification is FACW. Hough (1983) indicates the species is at its northern limits of distribution, and specimens exist for a few Coastal Plain counties. USDA Plants Database maps its presence in only two New Jersey counties, Monmouth and Mercer. It is absent from the Pine Barrens ecosystem. This month's photos were taken in Greenwich Twp, Gloucester County, from a palustrine wetland along the London Branch, Repaupo Creek watershed.

Ipomoea lacunosa is one of at least five members of the genus in New Jersey. All occupy disturbed habitats. This morning-glory is native, and has small white flowers, whereas the other New Jersey species have brightly colored corollas, red, purple, or blue. It is best identified by its small white flowers, and heart shaped leaves.

Our Plant of the Month is also known as white-star potato because this annual vine forms an edible tuber. Members of the genus are a known source of food throughout the genus distribution, utilizing the seasonal tubers as potatoes (Moerman, 1998). White morning-glory flowers throughout the summer. Its infrequent distribution makes discovering this little native more of a challenge. Those searching for this species can find it in the agricultural wetlands in western Gloucester County. Elsewhere, search disturbed stream banks and wet roadsides.