

Oblique Milkvine (*Matelea obliqua*)

Plant Species of Concern

State Rank: S1 (critically imperiled), **Global Rank: G4** (apparently secure)

Identification

Oblique milkvine is a herbaceous perennial vine that has hairy, twining stems. This species is a member of the milkweed family and its stems produce a milky sap if broken.

Leaves grow in opposing pairs along the stem. The leaves have prominent veins and are broadly oval with heart-shaped bases. Flowers are purplish-brown and have 5 long, twisted petals. The flowers are held on stalks in small clusters from the leaf axils. Flowers bloom from late April to October and after flowering, plants produce large, prickly seedpods.



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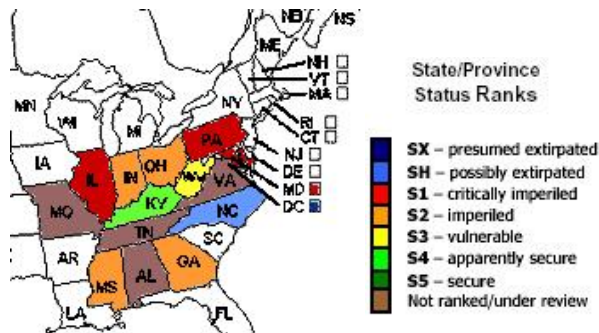
Photo source: Thomas G. Barnes
<http://plants.usda.gov>

Habitat

Oblique milkvine occurs from Pennsylvania south to Georgia and west to Missouri and Mississippi. In Pennsylvania, it grows in limestone glades, open woodlands, and thickets. This species seems to do particularly well in open woodlands created by fire.

North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe (2007)

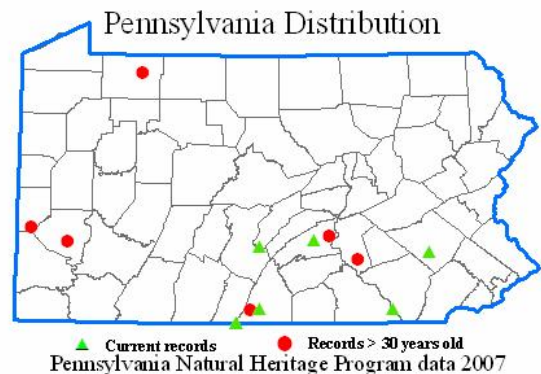


Status

The PA Biological Survey considers the oblique milkvine to be a species of special concern, based on the relatively few occurrences that have been confirmed and the very specialized habitat. It has been assigned a rarity status of Endangered. Oblique milkvine is threatened by habitat loss through land conversion for development or habitat succession. The clearings where it grows are often transitional in nature and created by disturbance, such as fire, wind, or flooding. Over time, if these disturbances are minimized, the open habitats may become overgrown by woody or invasive species.

Conservation

Maintenance of known populations and preservation of the open communities where oblique milkvine grows will be crucial to its survival. Removal of overgrowth and invasive species with the integration of fire regimes, when appropriate, will help to preserve the integrity of the sites. The management of the known sites requires long term monitoring of populations. Potential sites for restoration should be evaluated.



References

- NatureServe. 2007. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 6.2. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. (Accessed: September 4, 2007).
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