

Weed Control

Similax or "Carrion Flower"

(*Similax herbaceae* L)

Similax is a herbaceous perennial with a perennial underground root system and a herbaceous top which freezes back to the ground line every fall. It is a native prairie and semi-timbered woodland plant. Presently, it is found only on noncultivated areas such as fence rows, roadsides, ditch banks, railroad embankments, native areas, and at the edges of timbered areas. It is found sparingly over a wide range, from New Brunswick to Pennsylvania westward and south-



westward to Manitoba and Texas. The plant is a weak climber, usually depending upon other plants or fences for support.

Description

The name "Carrion Flower" refers to the ill-scented odor of the blossoms. The blossoms are borne in umbels (umbrella-like clusters) and are greenish white in color. The blossoms eventually produce green berries which become glossy black when ripe. Each cluster of seeds is borne on a single stem, and each compact cluster is about the size of a golf ball. Following the first frost, the ovate-to-rounded heart-shaped leaves drop off the plant, and only the stem, including its black clusters of berries, remains. These are very conspicuous and attract the attention of hikers, nature lovers, and hunters.

Control—Not Needed

The plant poses no problem as a weed or brushy pest. In fact, it is often transplanted and used as a rough climbing ornamental around homes. The berries are food for birds and wild animals but are not used by humans as food. The plant is a mute reminder of our prairie and woodland past. It disappears very readily upon the advent of any cultivated crop. The clusters of berries are often gathered and used in winter bouquets, either in the natural or sprayed condition, like bittersweet.

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