

September Native Plant of the Month

Blue Vervain (*Verbena hastata*)

By Jackie Algon



Blue vervain is a native perennial wildflower that grows in disturbed moist soils, meadows, thickets, riparian buffers, marshes and ditches. It can attain a height of two to five feet with a square stem that is either red or green. An erect plant with six inch long toothed lance-shaped leaves that are one inch wide, in full to part sun conditions, it produces purple-blue flowers on a stem that can be up to five inches long.



Photo: Steve Rappaport

Blue vervain provides food to numerous species of birds as well as serving as larval host plant for the common buckeye butterfly and attracting the caterpillars of the verbena moth. A variety of bees and other pollinators use the nectar of this plant when it is in bloom from mid-summer to fall. The nutlets that form about six weeks post bloom contain seeds that can be collected, dried, stratified and sown. In addition, Blue vervain spreads by rhizomes, making it an excellent native replacement for the invasive purple loosestrife.

This plant has biological properties that are often used to treat various internal and external human health conditions, but it can interfere with some drugs that are commonly taken and should not be consumed without medical consultation.