



Invasive Plants in Pennsylvania

Wavyleaf Basketgrass

Oplismenus hirtellus spp. *Undulatifolius*



WB in Patapsco Valley State Park, MD.
Kerrie Kyde, MD-DNR.

Background:

Wavyleaf basketgrass, an introduced sub-species of a native basketgrass (*O. hirtellus* (L.) P. Beauv.), is a fast spreading understory grass that forms dense stands in deciduous forests.

Range:

Wavyleaf basketgrass was first discovered in Howard County, MD in 1996. In 2000, it was found growing along a stream in Baltimore County, MD. Documented locations have also been found in VA, but it is not known to occur in PA yet. It is native to Europe and Asia.

Description:

The leaf blades are flat, dark green, about 0.5 inches wide and 1.5 to four inches long, with rippling waves across the blade. The leaf sheaths and stems are noticeably hairy. When it blooms, from mid-September to November, the grass spikelets form long sticky awns.



WB Spikelets. Kerrie Kyde, MD-DNR

Habitat:

This species is shade tolerant and does not tolerate sunny environments very well. It is mainly found in shaded, mesic deciduous forests.

Biology and Spread:

It is unclear how wavyleaf basketgrass was first introduced to the U.S., but possibly was a contaminant of discarded hanging baskets.

It spreads quickly through rhizomatous means. In addition, the sticky awn on the seeds may adhere to passing animals, people or vehicles, making it easily spread to new environments.

Ecological Threat:

This species can completely cover the forest floor, providing competition against native forest interior plant species. With the decrease in plant diversity, this species also provides very little wildlife value. Because this species is relatively new in the U.S., its ecological impacts are still mostly unknown.



How to Control this Species and Prevent its Spread:

Unless numerous other populations are discovered, wavyleaf basketgrass can still be eradicated from the Mid-Atlantic region. Most of the MD and VA populations are relatively small and can be eradicated through hand removal or by treatment with a two percent solution of glyphosate.

Due to its limited distribution, early detection and rapid response is the best strategy for addressing the problem. There is an urgent need for an organized effort by federal, state and local agencies, and volunteers to determine the total distribution of this species in the Mid-Atlantic region. Increased public awareness is critical for success of the effort.

This species may come into PA through unintended means, such as on hiking boots. It will most likely establish in southern PA, along the MD border. If you believe you encountered this species, please alert your local conservation agencies. In addition, cleaning your clothing and equipment before entering an uninfested area is a good measure to prevent unintended introduction of wavyleaf basketgrass.

Look-A-Likes:

Native Deertongue
(*Dicanthelium clandestinum*)



John Cardina, Ohio SU, www.bugwood.org

Invasive Japanese Stiltgrass
(*Microstegium vimineum*)



Chuck Barger, U-GA

Non-native Small Carpetgrass
(*Arthraxon hispidus*)



Leslie J. Mehrhoff, U of Ct, www.bugwood.org

References:

Westbrooks, R. and M. Imlay. 2009. *Wavyleaf Basketgrass – A New Invader of Deciduous Forests in Maryland and Virginia*. Southeast Exotic Pest Plant Council Factsheet, <http://www.se-eppc.org/southcarolina/WLBG.pdf>

For More Information:

Wavyleaf Basketgrass in Maryland, Maryland Department of Natural Resources: www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/wl_basketgrass.asp

Virginia Department of Forestry, Wavyleaf Basketgrass in Virginia: <http://virginiaforests.blogspot.com/2008/11/wavyleaf-basket-grass-invasive-exotic.html>

