

[Back to weed management](#)

## Pennsylvania smartweed

*Polygonum pensylvanicum* L.

**Life cycle:** Erect summer annual.

**Leaves:** Cotyledons are narrow oval to lance-shaped with rounded tips. Leaves are alternate, lance-shaped with pointed tips and smooth margins, usually hairless and occasionally with a purple watermark.

**Stems:** Branched, erect up to 4 feet tall and jointed with swollen nodes. A smooth, membranous sheath (ocrea) surrounds the stem at the base of each petiole.

**Flowers and fruit:** Small, pink to white flowers form in dense, spikelike clusters at the tips of stems. The seed is enclosed in a single-seeded, flat, glossy black, round to oval fruit with a pointed tip.

**Reproduction:** Seeds.



*Pennsylvania smartweed leaf.*

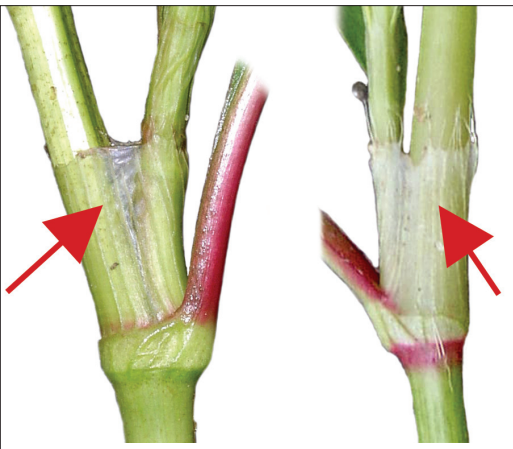
All photos this page: Steven A. Gower



*Pennsylvania smartweed immature flower cluster.*



*Pennsylvania smartweed seedling.*



*Pennsylvania smartweed ocrea. Ladythumb ocrea.*

## Pennsylvania smartweed *continued...*

### Similar weeds

**Ladysthumb** (*P. persicaria* L.). Differs by having a fringe of bristly hairs at the top of the ocrea. Usually has a purple watermark on leaf.

**Pale smartweed** (*P. lapathifolium* L.). Differs by having young leaf undersides with whitish hair, older leaf undersides with yellow glands and a nodding inflorescence.

**Swamp smartweed** (*P. amphibium* var. *emersum* Michx.). Differs by having perennial, creeping, woody rhizomes and usually hairy foliage; found in wetter environment.



Steven A. Gower

*Hairy foliage of swamp smartweed.*