

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 immature flower cluster.



Pennsylvania smartweed seedling.



Pennsylvania smartweed leaf.



Pennsylvania smartweed ocrea.

Ladysthumb ocrea.

Polygonaceae (Smartweed family)

[Scroll to next page.](#)

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Polygonum pennsylvanicum L.



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 environments.



Hairy foliage of swamp smartweed.