

Thursday, February 26, 2015

Wavyleaf Basketgrass

Oplismenus hirtellus spp. *undulatifolius*



Wavyleaf basketgrass is an aggressive, introduced subspecies of the native basketgrass *Oplismenus hirtellus*. Native to parts of Europe and Asia, it is thought to have arrived in the United States through discarded and contaminated hanging flower baskets. It was first discovered in Patapsco Valley State Park, Maryland in 1996. Currently, its distribution is limited to a handful of sites in Maryland and Virginia, including 80 acres in Shenandoah National Park.

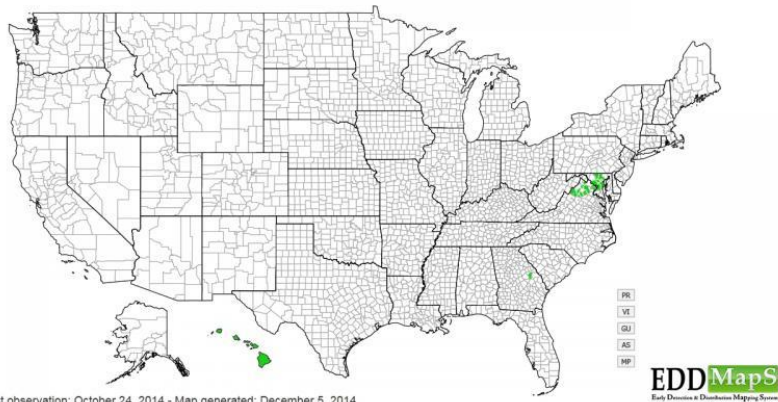
The leaves of Wavyleaf basketgrass are flat, dark green and have rippling waves across the blades. They are similar in appearance to invasive Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*) leaves, but come to a sharper, more elongated tip and lack the silver mid-stripe of stiltgrass leaves. The leaf sheath and stem are hairy. In the autumn, Wavyleaf basketgrass forms sticky awns (seeds), which easily attach to clothing, animals and vehicles.

Wavyleaf basketgrass is a perennial, extremely shade tolerant, and can easily out-compete the native vegetation of deciduous forests to form a monoculture. This, combined with its ability to quickly spread by rhizomes and sticky seeds, could allow it to invade nearby areas. It is of little value to native wildlife. Although it is not currently present in Delaware, its seeds could make their way here on the clothing or vehicles of unsuspecting visitors. Early detection and rapid response will be essential in preventing this invasive from getting a foothold in our forests. Currently, groups in Maryland and Virginia are working to eliminate Wavyleaf basketgrass from known sites. Until these efforts are completely successful, the threat to Delaware remains real.

If you find an infestation of Wavyleaf basketgrass in Delaware, please carefully compare it to several lookalikes: invasive Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*); non-native Small Carpetgrass (*Arthraxon hispidus*); and native Deertongue grass (*Dicanthelium clandestinum*). Suspected Wavyleaf basketgrass colonies should be reported to State of Delaware botanist (DNREC) Bill McAvoy: william.mcavoy@state.de.us



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Last observation: October 24, 2014 - Map generated: December 5, 2014