

rattlesnake master *Eryngium yuccifolium*.

Kingdom: Plantae

Division/Phylum: Magnoliophyta

Class: Magnoliopsida

Order: Apiales

Family: Apiaceae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

Rattlesnake master is a perennial herb with leaves arranged alternately along the stem. The simple, entire leaves are clustered near the base of the plant. Each leaf is pointed, stiff, spiny-edged and long. Spherical heads of tiny, white, five-parted flowers are present at the stem tip. Each flower head may be one inch in diameter. Flower heads may appear to have a blue or green tint. The fruit is a schizocarp, a dry structure that splits at maturity into two or more sections, each containing one seed. Rattlesnake master may attain a height of two to four feet.

BEHAVIORS

Rattlesnake master may be found throughout Illinois. It grows in moist prairies, open areas in woods and thickets. Flowers are produced from July through August. New growth of this plant provides an important food source for grazing animals of the prairie. The common name, rattlesnake master, was given to this plant because early settlers thought it had use in treating rattlesnake bites. The belief was not true, however.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; edge; gravel prairie; sand prairie

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