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X. VERONICASTRUM  Heister ex Fabricius, Enum., 111.  1759 [Genus Veronica and Latin -

- astrum, resembling]

Craig C. Freeman

Herbs, perennial; rhizomatous.  Stems erect, sparsely to densely villous proximally or, 
sometimes, glabrous.  Leaves cauline, 3--7-whorled, rarely opposite, not leathery; petiole 
present; blade margins serrate to doubly serrate.  Inflorescences terminal, spikelike racemes; 
bracts present.  Pedicels present; bracteoles present.  Flowers bisexual; sepals (4--)5, connate, 
calyx bilaterally symmetric, cylindric, lobes lanceolate; petals 4, corolla white or pinkish, 
weakly bilaterally symmetric, weakly bilabiate, tubular-salverform, spurs absent, abaxial lobes 
3, adaxial lobes 1; stamens 2, adnate to corolla proximally, equal, filaments pubescent 
proximally, staminode 0; ovary 2-locular, placentation axile; stigma capitate.  Capsules 
symmetric, dehiscence loculicidal, sometimes also septicidal, becoming 2- or apparently 4-
valved distally.  Seeds 10--30, brown or reddish brown, ellipsoid, not winged.  x = 17.

Species ca. 20 (1 in the flora): c, e North America, e Asia.

Veronicastrum appears to be part of a grade of genera in tribe Veroniceae that is ancestral 
to Veronica (D. C. Albach et al. 2004).

1. Veronicastrum virginicum  (Linnaeus) Farwell, Druggist's Circ. 61: 231.  1917  *  Culver's-root or -physic

Veronica virginica Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 1: 9.  1753

Stems 1, unbranched or branched distally, 80--200 cm, sparsely villous or glabrous distally.  Leaves: abaxial 
surface lighter than adaxial surface; proximal leaves withering, petiole 2--4 mm, blade lanceolate to broadly 
lanceolate or elliptic, (4--)7--14 x 1--3.6 cm, base tapered, apex acuminate; distal leaves: petiole 0.1--3 mm, blade 
lanceolate to narrowly lanceolate or elliptic, 2--4 x 0.3--1 cm, base tapered, apex acuminate.  Racemes 1--8(--12), 
continuous, cylindric, 6--35 cm; bracts leafy, greatly reduced distally, (4--)12--75 x 1--12 mm, margins serrate, 
apex acuminate; cymes 1--2-flowered.  Pedicels ascending, 0.3--1.2 mm, glabrous; bracteoles linear-lanceolate to 
linear.  Flowers: calyx, glabrous, lobes 1.2--3 x 0.5--1 mm, abaxial 2 shorter than abaxial (2--)3, margins white to 
pinkish, entire or obscurely erose, membranous, apex acuminate; corolla 4--5.5(--6.5) mm, glabrous externally, 
obscurly pubescent internally, especially near filaments, tube not differentiated from throat, 1--1.3 mm wide, 
lobes spreading, broadly ovate to triangular, 1.2--2.2 mm, abaxial 3 narrower than adaxial 1; stamens distinct, 
long-exserted, filaments 7--9 mm, anther sacs oblong, navicular to nearly explanate, 1.2--1.5 mm, glabrous; 
nectariferous ring at base of ovary; style 7--9 mm.  Capsules slightly compressed laterally, ovoid to ellipsoid, 2.5-- 
4.5(--5.2) x 1.8--2.3 mm, glabrous.  Seeds 0.3--0.7 x 0.2--0.4 mm.  2n = 34.

Flowering Jun--Aug.  Dry to mesic forests, tallgrass prairies, thickets, oak savannas; 0--300 m; Man., N.S., Ont.; 
Nebr., N.J., N.Y., N.C., N.Dak., Ohio, Okla., Pa., S.C., S.Dak., Tenn., Tex., Vt., Va., W.Va., Wis.

The roots and rhizomes of Veronicastrum virginicum were used widely by Native Americans as an emetic and 
cathartic (D. E. Moerman 1998).  The pharmacologic properties of this species have been studied and promoted 
since the early 1800s (K. Kindscher 1992).  Veronicastrum virginicum is grown widely as an ornamental and often 
escapes from cultivation.  Populations in Nova Scotia are introduced.