

School-to-Nature



Canadian Milk Vetch

(Also called Canada Milk Vetch, Canadian Vetch, Latin Name *Astragalus Canadensis*)

Canadian Vetch is a flowering plant with long “pinnately compound” leaves. That means there are tiny leaflets growing opposite one another, on each side of a long stem. You can see that in the photo to the right. Vetch plants can grow 1-4 feet tall. Each plant has a tap root that reaches deep into the soil, so that it can tolerate drought; but it prefers moist soils and sunny or partly sunny growing conditions. On Conservancy lands it can be seen at Tabor Woods in open prairie areas, wetlands, and woods edges. The plant is a member of the Pea or Legume family; you will recognize all members of this family by that same leaf form.



Canadian Vetch blooms in May, June, and July, in long stems of flowers that droop down slightly. The flowers attract many types of pollinators: bees, flies, butterflies and moths, and hummingbirds. Flowers can appear pale yellow to greenish to creamy white. Flowers are followed by scepters of bead-like seeds, seen in August and following months.



Vetch seeds are a food source for birds, as the plant holds onto its seed late into the fall and early winter. The seeds are a good food source for deer, wild turkey, groundhogs, squirrels, and rabbits. The plant and flowers are very bitter, and mildly toxic to humans, horses, and cattle.

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