

OENOTHERA PARVIFLORA L.
Small-flowered Evening-primrose

FAMILY: Onagraceae

SYNONYMS: *Oenothera cruciata* Nutt. ex G. Don

HABIT: Herbaceous biennial or short-lived perennial to 2 m; flowers July-August; fruits September-October.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Superficially resembles the common evening-primrose, *Oenothera biennis* that grows in the same habitats. Distinguished by various floral characters. The growing tip of *O. biennis* is upright in bud; the growing tip of *O. parviflora* nods in bud.

TOTAL RANGE: Along the Atlantic coast from Newfoundland to VA, west along the Great Lakes to MN, and scattered in the Midwest to AR.

STATE RANGE (as of 2008): Post-1980 records are from Ashtabula, Erie, Geauga, Lake, Lucas, Ottawa, and Summit Counties.

HABITAT: A variety of well-drained, sunny openings, usually in sand or gravel and often disturbed. The Ohio population grows on a barrier beach along Lake Erie.

HAZARDS: Overgrowth by woody vegetation.

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: Probably good because of this species' adaptation to disturbed habitats.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: Collect mature flowering or fruiting plants; note the nodding growing tip.

COMMENTS: *Oenothera parviflora* and *O. biennis* belong to the subsection *Euoenothera*, a notoriously difficult complex of poorly defined taxa. Some writers have lumped these entities into one overall species, though that treatment seems extreme. *Oenothera parviflora* is one of the better-defined taxa in this subsection. It often is overlooked because of its similarity to the widespread *O. biennis*. In Erie County these two species grow in a mixed population. This accentuates the differences between them. Small-flowered evening-primrose should be sought in sandy sites along Lake Erie and on the Erie Islands. Moseley (1899) states that this species occurs at "Sandusky and probably Cedar Point and elsewhere about the lake" (p. 119)

Moseley (1899) and Shaffner (1914) reported this species as *Oenothera oakesiana*, distinguished from the typical *O. parviflora* by the nature of the pubescence.

SELECTED REFERENCES:

Gleason, H.A., and A. Cronquist. 1991. Manual of vascular plants of northeastern United States and adjacent Canada. New York Botanical Garden, Bronx, New York. 910 pp.

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Raven, P.H., W. Dietrich and W. Stubbe. 1980. An outline of the systematics of *Oenothera* subsect. *Euoenothera* (Onagraceae). Syst. Bot. 4: 242-252.

Voss, E.G. 1985. Michigan Flora. Part II. Dicots (Saururaceae-Cornaceae). Cranbrook Inst. of Sci. Bull. No. 59 and Univ. of Michigan Herb. Ann Arbor, MI.



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