

Amaranthaceae

Amaranth Family

Mostly ruderal annuals, there are 900 species in 65 genera. A single genus reaches Nova Scotia. Their flowers are inconspicuous, green and apetalous, subtended by papery bracts. Flowers are unisexual although the plants are monoecious. The terminal inflorescence is brushlike or axillary. A single lens-shaped achene is produced. Some are flowering ornamentals, such as *Celosia* and Love-lies-bleeding (*Amaranthus caudatus*) and others are used for grain.

***Amaranthus* L.**

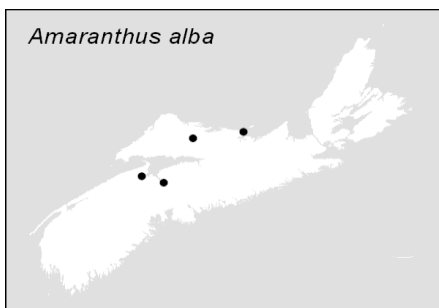
Three of 50 species have been introduced into Nova Scotia.

Key to species

- A. A. Plants slender, branching diffusely; flowers in small axillary clusters; seeds small, <0.8mm wide. *Amaranthus albus*
- aa. Plants robust, erect; flowers in large terminal inflorescences; seeds >1mm wide. B
 - B. Leaves green beneath; sepals pointed. *A. hybridus*
 - bb. Leaves whitish beneath; sepals truncate. *A. retroflexus*

***Amaranthus albus* L.**

Tumbleweed; amarante blanche



An erect herb, its stems are freely branching. Leaves are elliptic or oblanceolate, borne on petioles. Flowers are arranged in dense axillary clusters.

July to October, on disturbed soils.

Uncommon and appearing as a garden weed or about railways. Collected from Truro, Wentworth, Windsor and Kentville.

Ranges from western Canada to Mexico. Introduced throughout most of the continent.

***Amaranthus hybridus* L.**
Green Amaranth; amarante verte

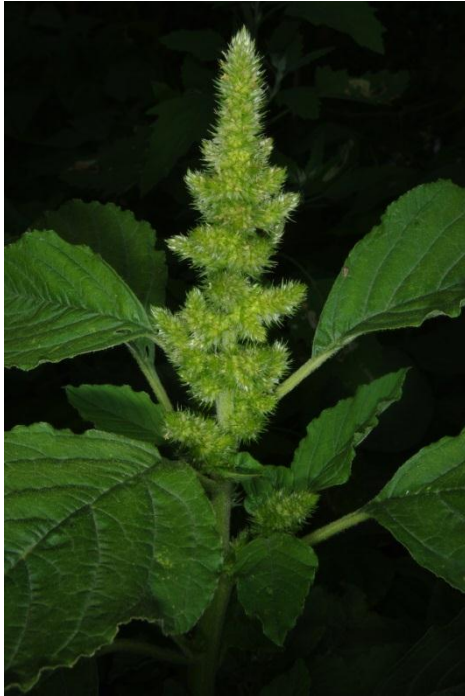
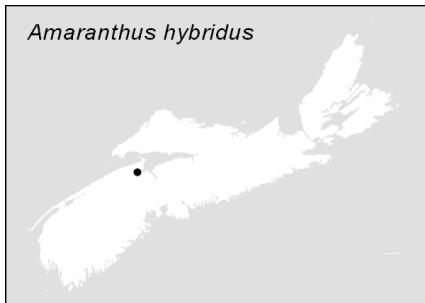


Photo by Martin Thomas



Amaranthus hybridus

Tall and robust, its stem reaches to 2m in height, often branching freely. Stems are scaly or lightly pubescent especially in the inflorescence. Flowers are reddish, not showy. Leaves are elliptic and petiolate.

August to October.

A weed of disturbed soils and cultivated fields.

It is limited to a few well-established populations: Morristown and other communities in Kings Co.

Native to the tropics, it is widespread but infrequent yet in eastern Canada as an adventive.

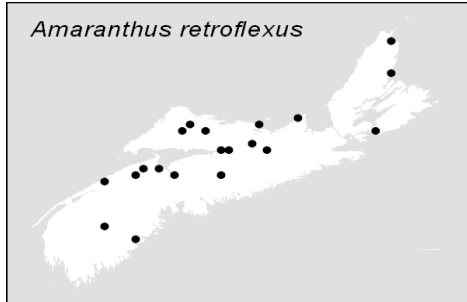
***Amaranthus retroflexus* L.**
Redroot Pigweed; amarante à racine rouge



Photo by Martin Thomas

A coarse herb with stout erect stems, they are sometimes pubescent and usually branching. Oval or deltate leaves are carried on petioles. The inflorescence comprises numerous bristly spikes of indistinct and densely packed flowers. Readily distinguished by the red taproot.

Flowers from August to October in gardens, wasteland and in cultivated fields. Potential to become troublesome in



cultivated fields, unlikely to threaten native habitats. Scattered throughout the province.

Introduced from tropical America.

Amaranthus blitum L. (formerly *A. viridus* L.) has been collected from Antigonish and Halifax. These collections should be re-examined for possible misidentification.