

Cucurbitaceae

pumpkin family

Represented in Nova Scotia only in gardens except for *Echinocystis*, this family of about 700 species includes our vegetable and fruit crops of pumpkins, squashes, cucumbers and melons. The 90 genera comprising it are mostly of subtropical or tropical regions.

Wild Cumber reaches NS, the only species to have ranged northward. It is a trailing herbaceous vine, clamouring by coiling tendrils. Simple leaves are lobed and coarsely pubescent. Flowers are unisexual, greenish yellow. The calyx is typically five-merous, the five stamens attached to a hypanthium. Fruit is a pepo or berry. The oily seeds are compressed.

Echinocystis T&G

wild cucumber

A monotypic genus, it is six-merous, rather than the typical five. An annual vine, it weakly attaches to shrubs or evergreens. Staminate and pistillate flowers are carried together in the leaf axils. Staminate flowers form large racemes, while the pistillate flowers are solitary or in small clusters. The spiny inflated fruit is often persistent over winter as a skeleton.

Echinocystis lobata (Michx.) T&G

Wild Cucumber; concombres grimpant



Photo by Marian Munro

Described above. It is often cultivated as a vine over rocks, walls or fences. The stems and petioles are straw-coloured. Leaves have five acute lobes, their margins are serrate or smooth. Flowers are axillary, carried in racemes. Fruit to 5cm in length.

Escaping to edge habitats and roadsides, floodplains.

Central and southern parts of the province. Introduced.



Photo by Martin Thomas

Ranges from NS to BC, south to FL and TX.