

Malvaceae

mallow family

A large family, it includes prized ornamentals such as hibiscus and the textile cotton. Nova Scotia has but two genera of the 75 known. Ours are escaped garden flowers and weedy ruderals. The hollyhock, a much-loved flower, is cultivated locally. Typical of the more than 1000 species, are flowers with numerous stamens, united to form a tube around the pistil. Petals are large and showy, delicate in texture.

Key

Leaves cordate and merely toothed, not lobed; ovules (seeds) 2 or more per carpel.

Abutilon

Leaves serrated, variously palmately divided; ovules (seeds) 1 per carpel.

Malva

***Abutilon* Miller**

velvet-leaf

A warm-temperate genus, we have a single species out of more than 100, in NS. Ours is an adventive in sandy soils of gardens and fallow fields. Broadly cordate leaves are densely white tomentose, alternating along the stems. Yellow flowers are axillary.

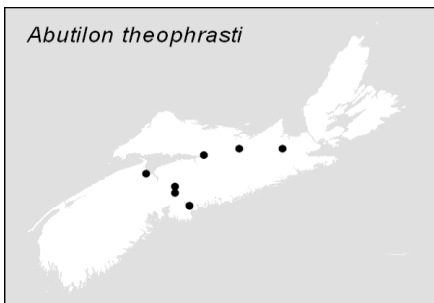
***Abutilon theophrasti* Medik.**

Indian Mallow, Velvet-leaf or India Hemp; abutilon de Theophraste



Photo by Martin Thomas

Plants are tall annuals, reaching 1.5m in height. Very large leaves exceed 18cm in length, softly tomentose; the hairs are stellate. Petioles are equal in length to the blades. Leaves are held stiffly erect in daylight, softly drooping by evening. Flowers may be 2.5cm wide. Carpels commonly number 15, with recurved beaks. Plant has an unpleasant odour if crushed.



Flowers from July to October.

Fallow fields, waste ground, in sandy soils.

Recently reported from Grand Pré, Wolfville and Halifax.

Ranges throughout suitable habitat in North America.
Introduced from India.

Malva L. **mallows**

Flowers have distinctive pistils containing a ring of single-seeded carpels, 10–20 in number.

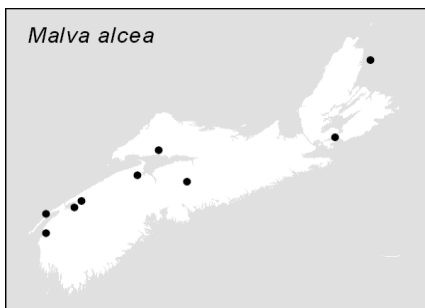
Key to species

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| A. Leaves 5–7 palmate lobes, cleft halfway or more; flowers large and showy, solitary or terminally crowded. | B |
| B. Calyx subtended by lanceolate or linear bracts; bracts lightly pubescent; leaves twice palmate, deeply cleft. | <i>Malva moschata</i> |
| bb. Calyx subtended by ovate bracts; bracts densely pubescent with stellate hairs; leaves shallowly lobed or coarsely toothed. | <i>M. alcea</i> |
| aa. Leaves nearly round, coarsely serrate, shallowly lobate; flowers axillary, small. | C |
| C. Plants erect, 1–2m tall; leaves shallowly palmate. | D |
| D. Bracts ovate-obovate; corolla reddish purple, to 1.5cm long;. | <i>M. sylvestris</i> |
| dd. Bracts narrowly lanceolate to linear; corolla to 1cm long, blue or white. | <i>M. verticillata</i> |
| cc. Plants prostrate to arcuate; leaves nearly round, cordate at the base; lobes if present, very shallow. | <i>M. neglecta</i> |

***Malva alcea* L.**
mauve alcée



Photo by Martin Thomas



Leaves are not so deeply cleft and not so ragged in appearance as those of *M. moschata*. Our plants tend to have more deeply-coloured flowers than those of other places.

An occasional escape from cultivation.

Scattered in St. Peter's, Richmond Co; Nine Mile River, Hants Co. Records too from Digby and Annapolis counties.

Ranges from NS to ON and south to IN and PA; SK. Originally introduced from Europe.

***Malva moschata* L.**
Musk-mallow; mauve musquée



Photo by Martin Thomas

Standing up to 1m in height, Musk-mallow has a single terminal flower or clusters, of up to seven white, pink or bluish flowers. The corolla is showy, with triangular petals. Calyx formed of ovate pointed sepals, subtended by linear or lanceolate bractlets. Calyx, pedicels and bractlets are often of varying degrees of hirsute. Leaves are variable in size and divisions.

Flowers late in June and July.

Roadsides, waste ground, old gardens in conspicuous patches.

Scattered throughout, although less frequent east of Halifax along the coast.

NL to MB, south to MO and NC; west coast. Introduced from Europe.

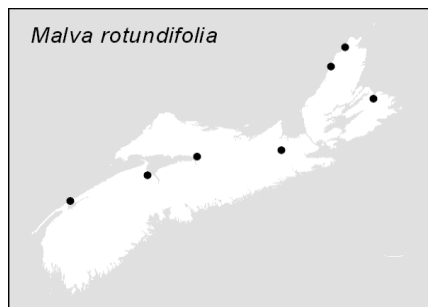
***Malva neglecta* Wallr.**

(=*M. rotundifolia* L. auct. non.)

Dwarf Mallow; Cheeses; mauve négligée



Photo by Martin Thomas



Kidney-shaped leaves on this weedy species are carried on long petioles and deeply notched at the base. Flowers are borne on very short pedicels, their carpels smooth.

Flowers from June through the summer until October.

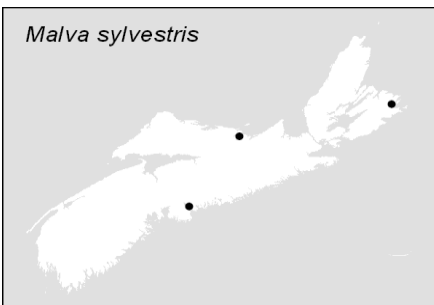
Gardens, yards, waste areas where it forms mats.

Becoming common and widespread on disturbed soils especially in the Annapolis Valley. Scattered elsewhere.

NL to AK, south to TX and GA. Introduced from northern Africa and Eurasia.

***Malva sylvestris* L.**

High Mallow; mauve de bois



Leaves with 3–7 lobes, often only three. Flowers produced in the leaf axils on short pedicels; usually purple.

Flowers from early summer until frost.

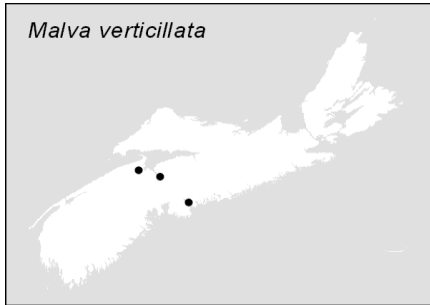
Waste soils, roadside.

So far only an urban weed, Sydney, Halifax and in Pictou County towns.

NS to BC, variously south to TX and NC. Introduced from Europe.

***Malva verticillata* L.**

Whorled Mallow; mauve verticillée



This species has its leaves both lobed and serrate. Flowers are reduced in size and carried in the leaf axils; their pedicels are very short.

Flowers July to September.

Local garden weed.

Collections from Windsor and Halifax are historic. Perhaps no longer persisting.

NS to AB and variously south to CA, NM and MD. Adventive from Europe.