

## Apocynaceae

### dogbane family

Mostly of the tropics, 2000 species are included. Typically plants have milky sap and simple opposite leaves. Most are herbs, a very few are shrubby. Five-merous flowers are perfect and regular. Corollas are sympetalous, tubular or salverform, the lobes overlapping. The stamens are inserted, alternating with the corolla lobes. Ovaries number two, stigma one. Fruits are a pair of slender follicles, containing many seeds.

#### Key to genera

Flowers axillary; showy; shrubby vine.

*Vinca*

Flowers terminal or axillary, not showy; erect herb.

*Apocynum*

### ***Apocynum* L.**

#### **dogbanes**

Only three species are included in this genus, all native to this continent. Two reach NS. Colonial, perennial herbs, they arise on stems clad in fibrous bark. Leaves are opposite with tiny acute tips. Flowers are small, arranged in corymbs at the end of the branches or stems. White or pink, the corolla is campanulate, subtended by a deeply incised calyx, its lobes deltate. Small scales oppose each lobe of the corolla tube within. The ovaries are surrounded by five nectaries.

#### Key to species

Corolla 6–10mm long, pink; lobes spreading or arcuate; stems branching near the top; plants with drooping appearance. *Apocynum androsaemifolium*

Corollas <6mm long, white, green or yellow, lobes ascending; stem simple; flowers ascending. *A. cannabinum*

***Apocynum androsaemifolium* L.**  
**Spreading Dogbane**



*Photo by Sean Blaney*

An erect plant, this species branches towards the top. The branches are carried horizontally; leaves are nearly secund. Flowers are pink and bell-shaped, reddish within the corolla. Fruits measure 5–15cm long. Seeds are armed with tufts of tawny hairs.

Found along roadsides and in fields, or elsewhere on sandy, stony soil.



*Photo by Sean Blaney*

Scattered throughout, except from Kings and Annapolis Co. to Colchester Co., where it is common and weedy.

Ranges from NF to AK, south to CA, TX and GA.

***Apocynum cannabinum* L.**  
**Indian Hemp, Worm Root**



Generally it is an erect plant with a simple stem. Flowers are usually smaller than those of the previous species and greenish white. Leaves are petiolate and vary from elliptic to ovate or lanceolate but are usually acutely pointed at the base.

This is a plant formerly used by the Mi'kmaq to expel worms.

Usually under an open canopy on gravel bars, in thickets and edges.

Found from Kings Co, north and eastward.

*Photo by Sean Blaney*



*Photo by David Mazerolle*

Ranges across Canada and southward.

### ***Apocynum xfloribundum* Greene (pro. sp.)**



*Photo by Sean Blaney*

This is a fertile hybrid between the two species above. Its leaves are lanceolate. Plants produce small flowers bearing an ivory coma.

Collected from Halifax and Lunenburg counties, northward. This is and it is known from most of the continent.

### ***Vinca* L.**

Native to Eurasia, this genus consists of 12 species. All are perennial; most are at least half-shrubby. Leaves are opposite, arising on long petioles. Flowers are blue and showy, arising from one axil of a leaf pair. FollICLES contain a few seeds. A single species occurs in Nova Scotia. This species is planted as an ornamental ground cover. Escapes are known and expected.

***Vinca minor* L.**

**Common Periwinkle; petite pervenche**



*Photo by Andy Dean*

A small neat vine, it is frequently planted for its hardy, woody form. The smooth lanceolate leaves are nearly evergreen and succulent, entire on the margins. Petals are united to form a corolla tube 8–12mm long.

Flowers in May and June.

Roadsides and in open woods. Shade-tolerant.

Yarmouth to Kings and Cumberland counties; Halifax to Cape Breton.

European, escaping throughout eastern North America to the Gulf of Mexico; BC variously south to AZ.



*Photo by Ross Hall*