

## Verbenaceae vervain family

A family with its greatest diversity in warm or tropical climates, there are about 2600 species. All have opposite leaves from quadrangled stems. Flowers are sympetalous and perfect, their corollas tubular or funnellform and 4–5-merous. Stamens are equal in number to the lobes and inserted. Ovary is divided into two carpels with four locules, dispersing at maturity as four nutlets.

### ***Verbena* L.** **Vervain**

Our single genus is an American species, with about 250 species found in North and South America. The tubular corolla has five lobes and is weakly two-lipped. Stamens are reduced to four, rather than five as is typical, these in pairs. Terminal style is lobed, with a single lobe stigmatic. Fruits are rugose.

Key to species

Mat-forming, tangled on the ground; inflorescence a single crowded spike; each flower subtended by a long acute bract; of weedy disturbed habitats. *Verbena bracteata*

Tall, erect herb; inflorescence is of multiple spikes; bracts absent; of riparian or other natural habitats, undisturbed by human activity. *V. hastata*

### ***Verbena bracteata*** **Bigbract Vervain**



Photo by Sean Blaney

Sprawling in habit, its pubescent stems form a tangled mat on the ground, to 30cm. The inflorescence is a crowded spike. Each flower is subtended by a long pointed bract, to 8mm.

Flowers May to October.

It is frequently found on roadsides, cracks of old runways, edges of lawns and other waste places.

A recent introduction, it has been discovered at Greenwood, both within the base and around its perimeter.

Native to the continent, it appears to be previously absent from the northeast.

***Verbena hastata* L.**  
**Blue Vervain**



*Photo by Ross Hall*



*Photo by Ross Hall*



*Photo by Alain Belliveau*

A tall herb, it is most noticeable in flower, when it bears numerous erect spikes of purplish-blue flowers. Leaves glaucous and are opposite, lanceolate and doubly-serrate.

Flowers during August and September.

Limited to mucky fertile soils, as along floodplains.

Scattered from Queens Co., to Cape Breton. Never common when found, but appears to be secure.

Ranges from NS to BC, south to FL and AZ; absent from AB.

