Invasive Alien Plant Species of Virginia

Aneilema (*Murdannia keisak* (Hasskarl) Hand.-Mazz)

Description

Murdannia keisak has no common name and is generally known as aneilema from its former scientific name, *Aneilema keisak*. It is a member of the spiderwort family (Commelinaceae) with weak, prostrate stems 12 to 30 inches long, rooting at the lower nodes, with upturned tips. The alternate leaves taper rapidly from the sheath to a very narrow blade 1 to 2½ inches long. In Virginia the three-petalled, white to bluish-purple, perfect flowers extend from the upper axils in late August to late September.

Habitat

Found in freshwater marshes and along the edges of ponds and streams, aneilema is associated with rice culture in East Asia. It was probably first brought to South Carolina or Louisiana in rice imported for growth in this country. While the earliest records of existence in the United States date to the 1920s and early 1930s, circumstantial evidence suggests that it could have been associated with our rice industry many years earlier.

Distribution

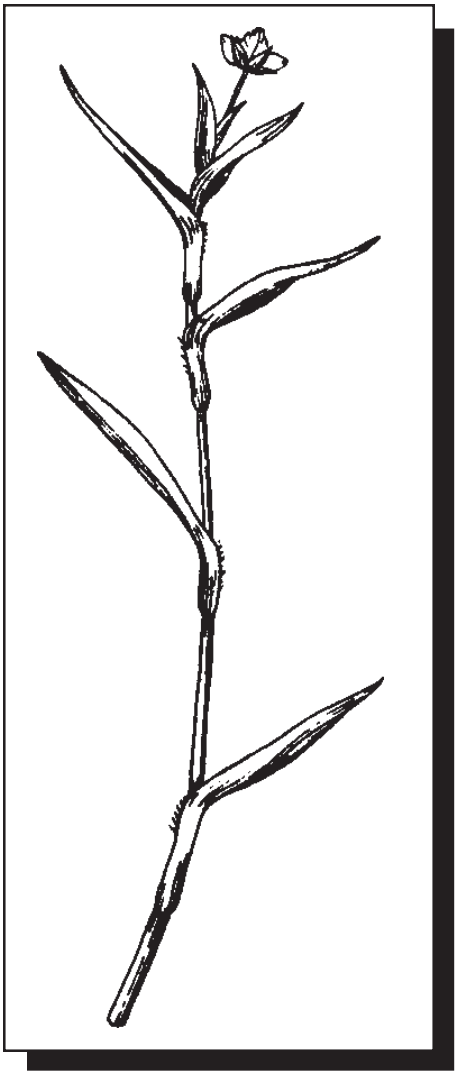
Aneilema is found today throughout Asia but is generally considered native to China, Japan, Korea and Tibet. In the United States, it is found in all coastal states from Delaware to Louisiana, and in Kentucky and Tennessee. It is also found in a freshwater tidal marsh in the Columbia River estuary between Washington and Oregon. Initially thought to be restricted to the coastal plain, aneilema is increasing in the Piedmont and Ridge and Valley Provinces of Virginia, Tennessee, northern Alabama and northern Mississippi. In Virginia, it is present in all Coastal Plain counties except the Eastern Shore, most of the central and northern Piedmont, and in Augusta County of the Shenandoah Valley. Aneilema seeds are a favored food of ducks and other waterfowl, which may be an important dispersal vector for the plant.

Threat

The aggressive nature of this plant has now been clearly displayed by its ability to establish itself in freshwater wetlands and crowd out native vegetation by forming a solid mat of vegetation. Even in its native region, this species is a troublesome weed. Not only does it produce thousands of very small seeds, it can reproduce vegetatively.

Control

Mechanical removal of aneilema is not recommended even when on ground that will support the equipment because remaining stem fragments will root and re-establish the plant. Only a biodegradable herbicide licensed for use in wetlands can be used. Consult an agricultural extension agent or



Aneilema (*Murdannia keisak* (Hasskarl) Hand.-Mazz**)**

For more information, contact the Department of Conservation and Recreation or the Virginia Native Plant Society.

DCR
Department of Conservation & Recreation
CONSERVING VIRGINIA'S NATURAL AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCES
217 Governor Street, Richmond, VA 23219
(804) 786-7951; *http://www.state.va.us/~dcr/vaher.html*

Virginia Native Plant Society
Blandy Experimental Farm
Route 2, Box 214
Boyce, VA 22620
(540) 837-1600
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Jim Gilmore, Governor • John Paul Woodley, Jr., Secretary of Natural Resources • David G. Brickley, Director, Department of Conservation and Recreation

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natural resource specialist to determine the appropriate control method for your situation.

For more information on native plant conservation, contact the Virginia Native Plant Society at the address below. For information on Virginia's natural areas and natural heritage resources, contact the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's Natural Heritage Program (*see address below*).

References

Dunn, Christopher and Rebecca Sharitz. 1990. History of *Murdannia keizak (*Commelinaceae) in the Southeastern United States. Castanea, 55 (2):122-129 (June 1990).

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Harvill, A., et al. 1992. Atlas of Virginia flora. Burkesville, VA

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