

***Astragalus arrectus* A. Gray**

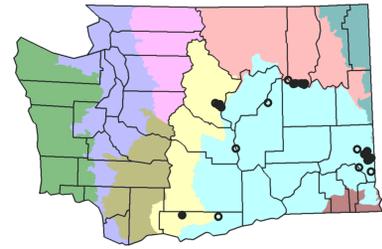
synonym: *Astragalus palousensis* Piper

Palouse milk-vetch

Fabaceae - pea family

status: State Threatened, BLM sensitive, USFS sensitive

rank: G2G4 / S2



General Description: Erect perennial. Stems numerous, in clumps, 2-4 dm long; herbage hairy, green or grayish green. Leaves 9-22 cm long, pinnate. Leaflets hairless above, numbering (17) 21-31 (33), linear-oblong, lanceolate, or rarely oval, 8-22 mm long. Stipules not fused opposite the petiole but somewhat decurrent-clasping, 4-8 mm long, becoming papery.

Floral Characteristics: Peduncles upright, 1-2.5 dm long, surpassing the leaves. Racemes with 15-35 flowers, 8-22 cm long in fruit; flowers erect, yellowish white, drying yellowish, 12-13 mm long. Calyx 5-6.5 mm long, with small, black, appressed hairs; tube 3.5-4.5 mm, the teeth about 1.5 mm long. Petals irregularly graduated, wings about 2 mm longer than the abruptly recurved banner, keel 10-10.5 mm long. Flowers late April to early July.

Fruits: Stalk 2.5-6 mm long, pod erect, narrowly oblong-ellipsoid, 15-23 x 2.5-6.5 mm, nearly straight, obcompressed, becoming leathery and loosely hairy with black and/or white hairs. Septum narrow but nearly complete.

Identification Tips: Most easily identified with mature fruits. To determine if the stipules are fused, look at the very lowest stipule on the stem. *A. arrectus* is recognized by its irregularly proportioned flowers, ascending from the raceme axis at a 45 degree angle, and erect, stalked, dorsally grooved pods of thick texture, with black or grayish brown, rarely white hairs. *A. leibergii* is similar, but with white flowers, leaflets equally hairy on both sides, stipules fully fused into a 2-toothed sheath, and a narrow to nearly absent septum.

Range: Regional endemic of the Lower Snake, Clearwater, and Palouse Rivers in ID, and the Palouse and northern Columbia Basin regions of WA. Also reported from OR.

Habitat/Ecology: Grassy hillsides, sagebrush flats, river bluffs, and grassy or shrub-dominated openings of ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) and Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) forests. On all aspects; soils range from rocky and dry to moist and rich. Elevations in WA: 300-1220 m (1000-4000 ft). Associated species include snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*) and bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*).

Comments: Much of this species' habitat has been converted to agriculture; additional habitat loss and livestock grazing threaten the remaining populations. It is also rare in ID.



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