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***Thymelaea Passerina*, A new Weed in the United States¹**

By RICHARD W. POHL

During a survey of the loess bluffs flora of the Missouri River border of Iowa, Morrill (1953) discovered a few individuals of an unknown weed growing on bare vertical loess south of Council Bluffs. It proved impossible to identify this plant with any of the usual American manuals. It eventually was determined to be *Thymelaea passerina* (L.) Coss. and Germ. Inquiries addressed to the principal American herbaria revealed that only one specimen of the plant had been previously collected in this country. This was found in a pasture in Cedar County, Nebraska, in the north-eastern corner of the state.

In 1954, a specimen of *Thymelaea* was sent to Iowa State College by Mr. Paul Watts, County Extension Director for Harrison County, Iowa. This specimen had been collected in St. John township, Harrison County. In this pasture, the plant appeared to be quite aggressive as a weed.

European manuals indicate that this species is a common weed over much of southern and central Europe and western Asia. It grows on dry soil, and appears commonly as a weed in grain fields. It remains to be seen whether this species will prove aggressive in the United States.

Thymelaea plants are slender, erect annuals, bearing linear-lanceolate leaves. The plants have much the aspect of some erect species of *Polygonum*, section *Avicularia*, or species of *Polygonella*. The beaked fruit and the absence of an ocrea should distinguish them. The specimens which we have bear an abundance of readily detachable fruits.

Since the three known stations for this plant in the United States are separated by distances of 40 to 160 miles, it seems very possible that others will be found in the intermediate area. All known American specimens are listed below:

Iowa: Harrison Co. Thin soil in a pasture; hillsides, Sec. 25, St. John Twp. Paul Watts. July 13, 1954. (ISC).

Pottawattamie Co. Bare vertical loess on west slope of bluff south of Council Bluffs. SW $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 27, Lewis Twp. J. B. Morrill. August 1, 1952. (ISC).

Nebraska: Cedar Co. "Almost completely taken over a pasture in northern part of Cedar Co." R. E. Weir. Sept. 2, 1950. (ISC).

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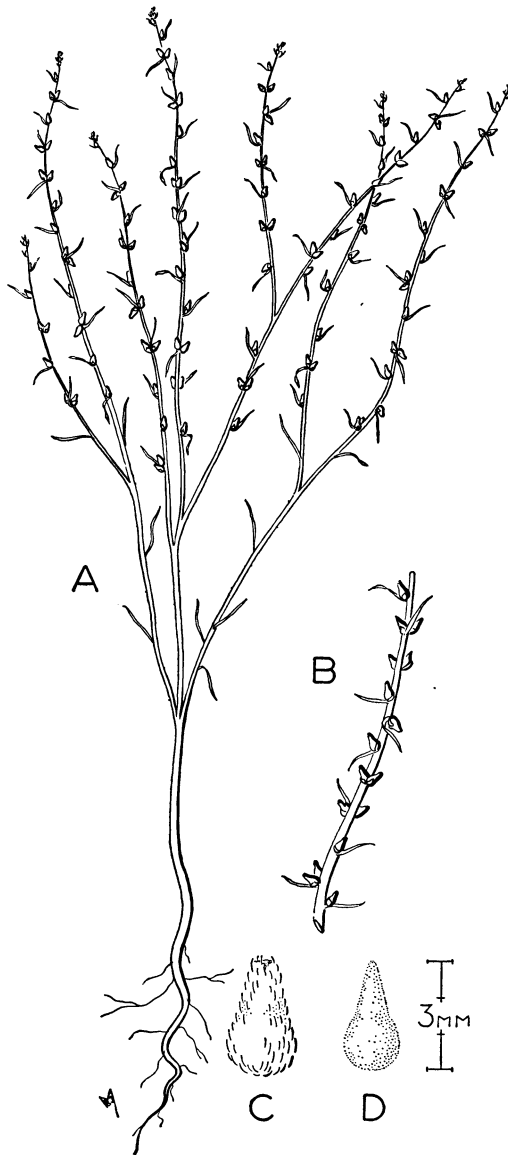


Fig. 1. *Thymelaea passerina*. A. Habit of Plant. B. Detail of fruiting branch. C. Fruiting calyx. D. Mature fruit.

Literature Cited

Morrill, John, Jr. 1953. Prairie flora on the Missouri River Bluffs of western Iowa. Unpublished M.S. thesis, Iowa State College.

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