

SMARTWEEDS

Polygonum spp. (*Persicaria* spp.)

There are about 125 annual and perennial species of small plants (occasionally shrubs) within this genus. Representatives are found throughout the world in a variety of habitats. Fifteen to twenty species are found in wet soils and freshwater marshes. The forms of species within this genus are highly variable from one location to another and, thus, caution must be used in identifying them. In addition, hybridization may be common.

Leaves are usually lance-shaped or oval. The flowers are normally located in clusters on the end of a stalk. Flowers normally pink, white or greenish. The structure of the flowers and the many joints with sheaths along the stem of the plants are characteristic of this genus. Some representative species follow.

The wetland species of this genus are important sources of food for waterfowl, marsh and shore birds, upland game birds, songbirds and to a limited extent, small mammals. Aquatic forms, in addition, may serve as food and cover for fish.