
Wildflower Spot – August 2010
John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

WHORLED ROSINWEED

Silphium trifoliatum

Aster Family

By Helen Hamilton, *President of the John Clayton Chapter, VNPS*

An imposing meadow plant, producing sunflower-like flowers well into the fall. Lance-shaped dark green leaves, purple stems, and vibrant yellow flowers provide an excellent color contrast.

Whorled Rosinweed grows 3-7 feet tall on smooth stems. The middle leaves are in whorls of 3 or 4 with short stalks; the leaves sometimes occur in pairs, or alternate on the stem. Sunflowers (*Helianthus spp.*) have mostly alternate leaves. Flowers are up to 2 inches wide with 15-20 rays.

Very tough and adaptable, preferring rich, well-drained soils, this plant is easy to grow in the home garden, in partial to full shade. Whorled Rosinweed spreads freely and fills in nicely around other shade perennials; it is drought tolerant once established.

A native in eastern U.S. and most counties of Virginia, Whorled Rosinweed is found in open woods, prairies, and disturbed open places. Blooms July-September.

The name of the genus *Silphium* comes from the Ancient Greek word for a North African plant whose identity has been lost; its gum or juice was prized by the ancients as a medicine and a condiment. ❖



Photo: Whorled Rosinweed (*Silphium trifoliatum*) taken by Helen Hamilton
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