

NYBG

New York City EcoFlora

Guide to *Plantago* (Plantain) of New York City

Related to Speedwell (*Veronica*) and Beardtongue (*Penstemon*) in the family Plantaginaceae, the genus *Plantago* consists of approximately 200 species growing around the world from Greenland to New Zealand-- nearly everywhere but Antarctica. Most are adapted to extreme environments such as beaches, rock outcrops, bogs and sand dunes. Lawns and roadsides are anthropogenic environments that may have intense UV radiation and sandy, unstable soils that mimic natural habitats and several species, such as Common Plantain and American Plantain, have adapted to these ruderal environments and are considered weedy.

The fruits of *Plantago* are dry, thin-walled capsules that open by splitting around the middle like a plastic egg (circumscissile).

Plantago arenaria Waldst. & Kit. – Flaxseed Plantain

Introduced; elongate stems with multiple inflorescences; in very sandy soils; rare in New York City. Links: iNaturalist [observations](#) from New York City. [Specimens](#) from the Mid-Atlantic Herbaria Consortium. Global biotic [interactions](#) from GloBI.

Plantago aristata Michx. – Long-Bracted Plantain

Introduced; very narrow leaves and elongate bracts in the inflorescence; in very sandy soils, usually near the coast; not common in New York City. Links: iNaturalist [observations](#) from New York City. [Specimens](#) from the Mid-Atlantic Herbaria Consortium. Global biotic [interactions](#) from GloBI.

Plantago cordata Lam. – Heart-Leaved Plantain

Native; usually with very large leaves with cordate bases; mud flats of fresh or brackish water; imperfectly known from New York City with no modern records; rare in New York State. Links: iNaturalist [observations](#) from New York City. [Specimens](#) from the Mid-Atlantic Herbaria Consortium. Global biotic [interactions](#) from GloBI.

Plantago lanceolata L. – English Plantain

Introduced; narrow leaves and short inflorescences; disturbed, usually well-drained soil, usually in full sun; very common in New York City. Links: iNaturalist [observations](#) from New York City. [Specimens](#) from the Mid-Atlantic Herbaria Consortium. Global biotic [interactions](#) from GloBI.

Plantago major L. – Common Plantain

Introduced; broad leaves with elongate inflorescences, the fruits plump, dehiscent around the middle (see Figure 1); disturbed, usually well-drained soil, usually in full sun; very common in New York City. Links: iNaturalist [observations](#) from New York City. [Specimens](#) from the Mid-Atlantic Herbaria Consortium. Global biotic [interactions](#) from GloBI.

Plantago maritima L. var. *juncooides* (Lam.) A. Gray – Seaside Plantain

Native; leaves linear, flattened, fleshy, glabrous; salt marshes, beaches and coastal rocks; last seen in New York City on Staten Island in 1937; threatened in New York State. Links: iNaturalist [observations](#) from New York City. [Specimens](#) from the Mid-Atlantic Herbaria Consortium. Global biotic [interactions](#) from GloBI.

Plantago media L. – Lamb's-Tongue Plantain

Introduced; leaves sessile and pubescent on both sides, similar to *Plantago lanceolata*, but wider; disturbed areas; last seen in New York City on Staten Island in 1911. Links: iNaturalist [observations](#) from New York City. [Specimens](#) from the Mid-Atlantic Herbaria Consortium. Global biotic [interactions](#) from GloBI.

Plantago pusilla Nutt. – Slender Plantain

Introduced; leaves linear, nearly terete, fleshy, pubescent; dry, sandy soil, often on rock outcrops; rare in New York City. Links: iNaturalist [observations](#) from New York City. [Specimens](#) from the Mid-Atlantic Herbaria Consortium. Global biotic [interactions](#) from GloBI.

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Plantago rugelii Decne. – American Plantain

Native; like *Plantago major* but the petiole bases red and the fruits narrow ovoid and dehiscent near the base (see Figure 1); disturbed, usually well-drained soil, usually in full sun; very common in New York City. Links: iNaturalist [observations](#) from New York City. [Specimens](#) from the Mid-Atlantic Herbaria Consortium. Global biotic [interactions](#) from GloBI.

Plantago virginica L. – Paleseed Plantain

Native; whole plant densely pubescent with multi-cellular, spreading hairs; dry, sandy soil; last seen in Washington Heights, Manhattan in 1901. Links: iNaturalist [observations](#) from New York City. [Specimens](#) from the Mid-Atlantic Herbaria Consortium. Global biotic [interactions](#) from GloBI.

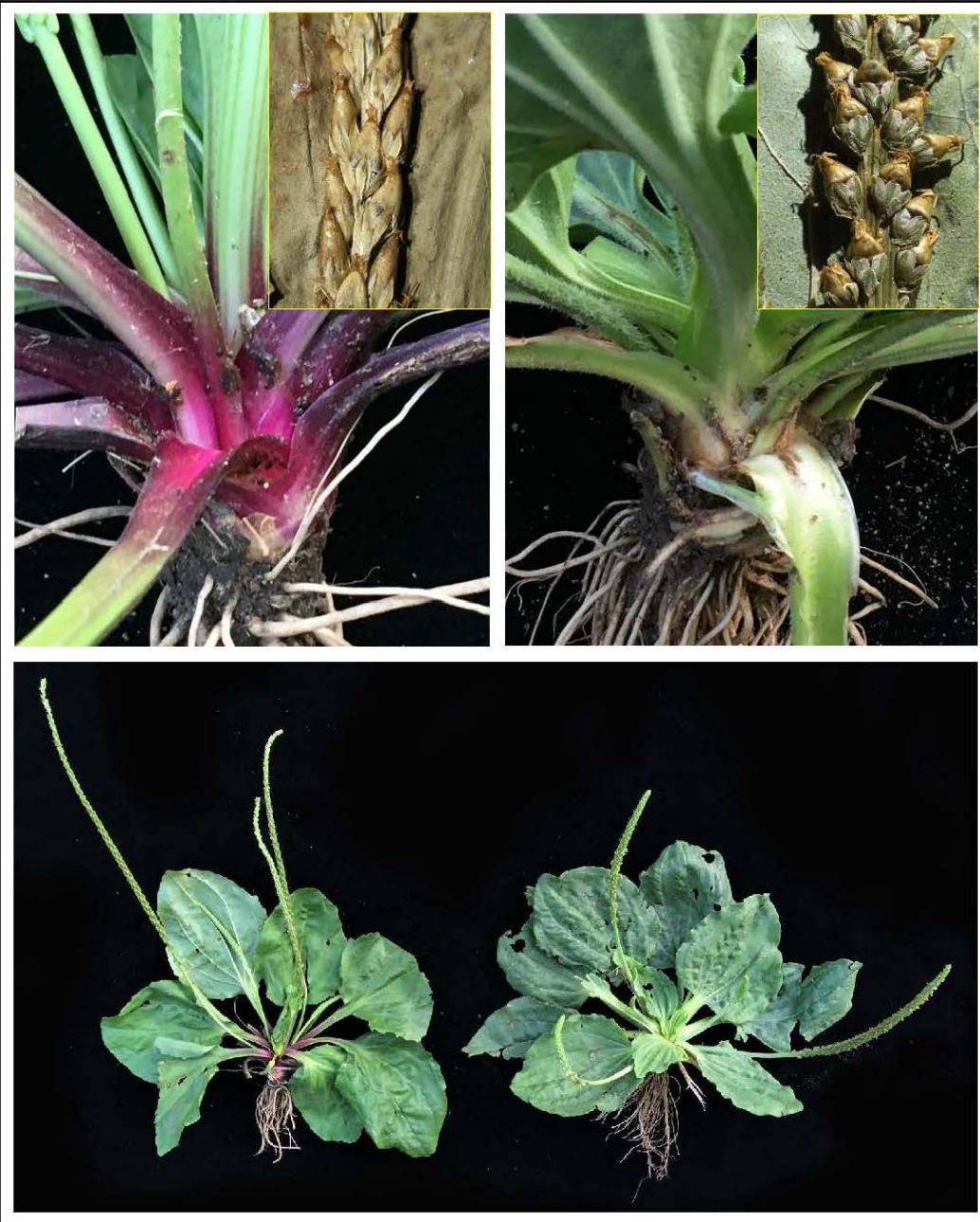


Figure 1. *Plantago rugelii*, American Plantain (left) and *Plantago major*, Common Plantain (right), both very common in New York City. Note the distinctive red petiole bases of *Plantago rugelii*. The fruits of *Plantago rugelii* are elongate and split open near the base, well below the middle, while those of *Plantago major* are ovoid and split open around the middle.