

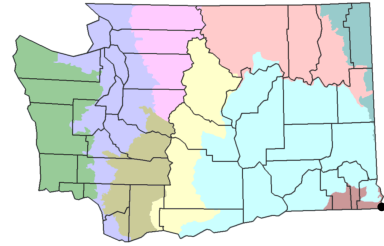
Astragalus asotinensis Björk & Fishbein

Asotin milk-vetch

Fabaceae - pea family

status: State Threatened, BLM sensitive

rank: G2 / S2



General Description: Adapted from Björk & Fishbein (2006): Bushy perennial with green herbage and numerous decumbent to ascending stems, 40-50 cm long, bearing straight, appressed hairs. Leaves pinnately compound; leaflets 15-23 per leaf, linear or narrowly oblong, 3.5-7.5 times longer than wide, with sparse, straight, basally attached hairs. Stipules not fused, broadly triangular, persistent, 2.5-3.5 mm long.

Floral Characteristics: Inflorescences in the leaf axils, ascending, racemes 18-45 cm long; bracts minute, persistent, narrowly triangular. Flowers 7-20, petals 5, creamy white, often lightly tinged with rose or lavender. Keel surpassed by the wings by 3 mm; wings surpassed by the banner by 3 mm. Calyx tube 6-7.3 mm long, with straight, appressed hairs; teeth 1.5 mm, pointed. Flowers late March to early May.

Fruits: Pods stalked, 28-37 x 3-3.5 mm, sparsely white-hairy, curved, straw-colored to reddish brown, each with a single undivided chamber. Fruits mature May to June.

Identification Tips: This species is not in Hitchcock & Cronquist (1973). Most easily identified with mature fruits. Though neither are sympatric with *A. asotinensis*, the two most similar species are *A. sclerocarpus* and *A. sinuatus*. *A. sclerocarpus* has herbage appearing whitish gray (greener with age), 9-13 linear leaflets per leaf, and nearly straight to slightly curved pods. *A. sinuatus* has herbage appearing whitish gray, with curved or curly hairs on the calyx and leaflets; leaflets are 2.6-2.9 times longer than wide, and there are 11-19 per leaf. *A. arthuri* can be distinguished by its long, narrow pods (35-50 x 3-4 mm), which are deeply indented below. Its leaves are more densely clustered at the base.

Range: Snake River Canyon of WA and ID.

Habitat/Ecology: Open canyon grasslands on steep slopes of all aspects, confined to limestone-derived soils or loose slate. Associated species include Snake River phlox (*Phlox colubrina*), balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza sagittata*), Snake River wheatgrass (*Elymus wawawaiensis*), Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*), and Cusick's bluegrass (*Poa cusickii*). Elevations: 400-900 m (1300-3000 ft).

Comments: This taxon, first described in 2006, is known from an area of about 8 km² (3 mi²).

References: Björk & Fishbein 2006.



photo by Joe Arnett



© Curtis Björk