

white wild indigo *Baptisia alba*

Kingdom: Plantae

Division/Phylum: Magnoliophyta

Class: Magnoliopsida

Order: Fabales

Family: Fabaceae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

White wild indigo is a perennial herb with leaves arranged alternately along the stem. The plant has a gray-green appearance. The smooth, stalked leaf is divided into three leaflets. Each leaflet is about three-eighths to three-fourths inch long and about half as wide as long. Leaves turn black upon drying. A long spike (about 12 inches) of pealike, white flowers and fruits is held above the leaves. Each five-petaled flower is about three-eighths inch in length. The fruit is a capsule that contains seeds. White wild indigo may attain a height of two to four feet.

BEHAVIORS

White wild indigo may be found throughout Illinois. It grows in dry to moist prairies and woods. Flowers are produced from May through July. Bees are the main agent of pollination. The leaves and fruits of this plant can be used to prepare a dye for the indigo color, which is how its “indigo” common name came about.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie

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