

New Invaders Watch Program

Early Detection and Rapid Response Network

COMMON NAME: **BABY'S BREATH**

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Gypsophila paniculata*

FAMILY: *Caryophyllaceae*

ORIGIN: Eastern and central Europe and Asiatic U.S.S.R. to western China

US INTRODUCTION: Late 1800's for garden ornamental and floral use

MAJOR PATHWAYS OF SPREAD:

- Wind
- Water
- Contaminated sand
- Mowing during seed set

IDENTIFICATION CHARACTERISTICS:

- Perennial herb growing up to 3 feet tall, spreads by seed
- Flowers tiny, 5-petaled, white to pink, button-shaped, and create dense clusters at the tips of branches
- Leaves are opposite with or without a clasping band of tissue around stem
- Branches numerous, slender, delicate, grows 12-20 inches tall and is openly branching
- Threatens beach and dune communities, sand prairies, gravel hill prairies; areas with full sun and sandy or gravelly soils



Plant



Leaves from a population in McHenry County, Illinois



Winter stem and partial root



Seedlings

NATIVE LOOK-ALIKES:

From afar, false baby's breath (*Galium mollugo*), also introduced, is similar in appearance. The leaves on *Galium* grow in whorls of 6 or 8, unlike the opposite leaves of *Gypsophila paniculata*; and the flowers have four white petals instead of the five that are typical of baby's breath.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

USDA Plants Database.
<http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=GYP>

WDNR, Wisconsin Plants of the Future.
http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/fact/babys_breath.htm



Baby's Breath Invasion at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, MI