



Christina Mild
RIO DELTA WILD

FLORA FACTS

Scientific Name: *Amblyolepis setigera*

Common Names: Huisache Daisy

Family: Compositae

Scented Wildflower Dangerous to Consume

Huisache Daisy continues to bloom at Ramsey Park in early July. One or two small plants can be found near the composting toilet. They are short in stature, but brightly festive, with distinctively-notched yellow petals.

As early as March, these pretty posies began blooming near the western border of the nature park, along the fenced edge which borders Loop 499. Seed was planted there last fall.

A number of wildflower books contain photos of this plant, including Dr. Al Richardson's *Wildflowers and Other Plants of Texas Beaches and Islands* (2002).

Because the leaves are occasionally eaten by white-tailed deer and cattle, Everitt, Drawe & Lonard saw fit to include the plant in *Broad-Leaved Herbaceous Plants of South Texas* (1999).

The name Huisache Daisy presumably arose from large masses of the plant found beneath Huisache and other shrubs. This I have yet to see. It sounds marvelous.

Geyata Ajilvsgi offers a possible explanation why this daisy may not be numerous in many places. "The plants are palatable to livestock and deer, and are often grazed from their natural range." (*Wildflowers of Texas*, 1984.) Ajilvsgi reports the plant to occur in all of Texas except northeast, southeast and south central areas.

Ajilvsgi has a newly-revised edition of this popular wildflower book, containing even more photographs and with updated botanical names. The book's jacket is nicely-constructed with folding flaps to be used as place-markers.

The most extensive writing about Huisache Daisy is likely found in *The Useful Wild Plants of Texas, Vol. 1* (Cheatham & Johnston, 1995). Those authors report *Amblyolepis* to bloom in company with Indian Paintbrush, Bluebonnet, Indian Blanket, Allium and Phlox.

Cheatham & Johnston warn against consuming any part of Huisache Daisy. It is widely-reported to exude a strong aroma similar to that of sweet clover, new-mown hay, or vanilla extract. This sounds pleasant enough, though I've yet to notice it. "This odor," they point out, "should be taken as a warning, as it often signals the presence of coumarin or one of its relatives."

Those who take coumarin to prevent blood clots must have their blood tested regularly and repeatedly and must adhere carefully to prescribed dosage to avoid bleeding problems. Based on the probability that Huisache Daisy contains a compound which interferes with clot formation, Cheatham & Johnston further warn against eating Huisache Daisy honey. In any case, the honey is reportedly of poor quality.

Blooms of this daisy adorn long, leafless stems which rise above a basal mound of soft leaves. Those with good vision or a magnifying device will note that leaves and stems are covered with long hair.

Seed for this annual wildflower is available on the web from Native American Seed.

Huisache Daisy can be expected to bloom for about two months until seed is set. It will re-seed to form patches and is especially attractive for bedding or woodland borders. Clay soil is to be avoided.



Technical assistance by Mike Heep, native plant nurseryman and UTPA Instructor.

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