

Christina Mild
RIO DELTA WILD



“Pink Mint is adored by Chachalaca, White-Tail Deer and other wildflower enthusiasts.”

FLORA FACTS

Scientific Name: *Stachys drummondii*

Common Names: Pink Mint

Family: Lamiaceae, Labiatae

Pink Mint Adorns the Woodland

Billy Snider took me to see his favorite wildflower patches in Harlingen in early spring. A gorgeous colony of Pink Mint was among the posies we admired. The colony he showed me was growing in full sun on an open lot which is periodically mown.

The next day I admired gorgeous Pink Mint in Liz DeLuna's yard in San Benito. The wind even stopped blowing long enough for me to get a good close-up.

Then I found the same square-stemmed plant emerging from one of many compost heaps in the Mild yard. It was growing from the moist black humus of decaying plant material.

In the past, I've noticed Pink Mint growing in woodland areas in low, open clearings. These are places which humus collects, so I've thought of this herbaceous bloomer as most frequent in good soil.

Drs. Correll & Johnston describe the usual occurrence of *Stachys drummondii* as in “clayey soils, sandy or gravelly loam in chaparral, open woods, palm groves and brushlands.” It would seem that this attractive plant is not finicky regarding soil type or placement. (*Manual of the Vascular Plants of Texas*, 1979.)

Stachys drummondii is fairly unique to our area. It is limited to adjacent Mexico, southern and Coastal Texas. You won't find photographs of *Stachys drummondii* or much information about it on the web. You will find photos in guides to native plants of the LRGV, along with those of several closely-related plants of similar appearance.

On our highly-sloped arroyo bank, I found a few plants of Pink Mint several years ago. Since then I've worked even harder to abolish the pervasive guinea grass. My efforts have been well-rewarded, as an extensive colony of Pink Mint now graces that slope. The pretty blooms surround the trunk of an old tree, providing a nice woodland spectacle. The plants are apparently reseeding, as *Stachys drummondii* is reported to be an annual or biennial species.

Drs. Everitt, Lonard & Drawe attribute the plant with usefulness to wildlife. Deer and chachalaca consume the softly fuzzy notched leaves. (*Broad-Leaved Herbaceous Plants of South Texas*, 1999.) Perhaps this is why our resident chachalaca family often roosts above the spot. On the other hand, perhaps they are responsible for dropping fertilized seed!



The unique sight of Pink Mint by a fallen log brings a sad realization that natural processes of decay are rarely allowed to occur in local, modern society. One rarely sees a rotting log covered with fungi of intriguing size, color and shape.

The typical person judges rotting logs as unsightly and hauls them off for disposal. Yet some of the most popular (and expensive) concrete sculptures in garden centers are rotting logs! A concrete log isn't nearly as exciting as a real one, with amphibians and centipedes scurrying out as you lift it and fungi appearing and changing through the seasons. Every kid needs their own selection of rotting logs to admire, including aged kids like myself.



Pink Mint has barely survived the rigors of my front yard, but small plants are courageously blooming with the return of cooler weather. Dr. Richardson finds this plant blooming almost year-round: fall, winter and spring. (*Plants of the Rio Grande Delta*, 1995.)

These beautiful plants are available from several native plant nurseries in the LRGV.

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