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RIO DELTA WILD

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“Rock Daisy is uncommonly encountered in Cameron and Willacy counties.”



FLORA FACTS

Scientific Name: *Perityle microglossa*

Common Names: Manzanilla Bronca, Rock Daisy

Family: Compositae

Rock Daisy Adorns Matz' Woods

Manzanilla Bronca blooms beautifully in James & Georgiana Matz' wooded refuge on the banks of the Arroyo Colorado. It is an herbaceous annual, uncommon in Cameron and Willacy counties, sometimes blooming from spring through fall.

I first encountered the plant on January 25, 2003, on a fieldtrip to those lovely woods. It is blooming throughout the trails there again this spring.

Although the plant isn't commonly encountered in this area, it does have a common name. Many are familiar with *Manzanilla* tea, Chamomile, for soothing digestive discomfort. Frank Wiseman, a local Master Naturalist, explains that *Bronca* probably refers to a sour taste as well as to roughly-textured leaves.

Plants in the genus *Perityle* are notably viscid and bitter-tasting.

Pronunciation: per-ih-TY-lee.

The translation of *Perityle* refers to the achene, which most folks would call a seed. A thickened margin surrounds this structure, *Peri* = *around*, *tyle* = *knot, knob or callus*.

There are approximately 63 species in the genus *Perityle*. They are native to southwestern parts of North America, with one species occurring in Chile and Peru. Most grow from crevices in bare rock exposures, thus the English common name of Rock Daisy.

The leaves of the various species vary widely in shape and arrangement, even upon the same plant.

Perityle microglossa has an unusual range. It is typical of southern Arizona, occurring also from the western coast of Mexico to Nicaragua and on the southern tip of Baja California. (Correll and Johnston, *Manual of the Vascular Plants of Texas*, 1979.)

It's likely that the photographs of *Perityle microglossa* which illustrate this article are the only ones you'll find in print. I have found no others, even on a thorough web search. Many plants known to occur in this area since the early 1800s have no published photographs as of this date.

A comprehensive photographic collection of all plants known to exist locally does not yet exist. It's important that we keep any photos of wild plants which we can't immediately identify, as well

as the date the photo was taken and the location where the plant occurs. This data can help us better understand our native vegetation as young botanists expand these studies in the future.

A. Michael Powell has studied the genus *Perityle* and written several papers about it. He has also co-authored several excellent botany field guides for the Trans-Pecos area. I've been unable to contact him for further information.

Perityle microglossa is rarely encountered in the LRGV, thus little is known about it.

Botanist Bill Carr of Texas Nature Conservancy had this to say about the delicate composite: "As for *Perityle microglossa*, I saw approximately 47 long tons of it on a ranch up near *La Sal Vieja* in Willacy County during a survey on 1-3 April (2003). I got really excited when I found it near the gate, but then it ended up being one of the most common herbaceous plants in *Loma* shrublands (upwind from *La Sal Vieja*) but also in nondescript mesquite woodlands throughout the ranch. Was 2003 just a good year for it, or has it always been that common there? *Quien sabe!*"

Mike Heep has the pretty wildflower growing at his native plant nursery in Harlingen. Perhaps many of us will be able to observe Rock Daisy in our gardens in the future.

Because of the hospitality offered by James & Georgiana Matz, a large group of fieldtrip participants was able to see this special wildflower on Feb. 21st, when Arroyo Colorado Audubon Society (ACAS) visited the Matz' property on a native plant fieldtrip.

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