



Christina Mild  
**RIO DELTA WILD**

“Stickleaf reported to adhere to pant legs.”

FLORA FACTS

Scientific Name: *Mentzelia incisa*

Common Names: Stickleaf

Family: Loasaceae (Blazingstar)

**Blazingstar on Green Island Audubon Sanctuary**

On a recent Green Island visit, I photographed a plant I hadn't seen before.

Mike Heep and Dr. Al Richardson, receiving the photo and request for identification, sent much the same question. “Did the leaves stick to your clothes?”

No, of course they didn't stick to my clothes! I was very careful not to disturb the plant, in case it was extremely rare!

Their question was highly relevant, as the common name for this yellow bloomer is “Stickleaf.”

Mike Heep reports that “It is quite common on Gatlin Island, the one off the tip of Stover Point at Laguna Atascosa, also Gabrielson Island to the north and a little west. A pair of pants that goes through the wash will still have the infernal leaves stuck to it.”

Stickleaf is closely-related to Stinging Cevallia (*Cevallia sinuata*), which has highly-irritating stinging hairs on the leaves. Both are in the family Loasaceae.

Stickleaf has hairs which are barbed, but not stinging.

A dozen species of *Mentzelia* are found in Texas. Some have leaves which feel sandpaper to the touch. Sheep ranchers, especially, look unkindly on the *Mentzelias*, as the leaves and stems become so embedded into fleece as to lower market value.

One might not think of sheep ranching and the LRGV. Delving into the pages of local history proves otherwise, but I leave that topic for the future.

Occurrence of *Mentzelia incisa*, as stated in Correll & Johnston is “On gravelly slopes, igneous soil along streams in s. Tex. ... also Mex.” *Manual of the Vascular Plants of Texas, 1979.*

Dr. Richardson adds more detail to where this attractive plant occurs: “Cameron, Hidalgo. Palm groves, sandy loam, gravelly soils.” *Plants of the Lower Rio Grande Delta, 1995.*

Stickleaf blooms during spring, summer and fall and is perennial.

I find no documentation that Stickleaf is useful, though I find it to be attractive. At least one related species has seeds which are edible.

Mike Quinn reports that two species of *Mentzelia* are reported as hostplants for two specific moths. “I can't offer much more from an entomological point of view.” Quinn tells me. “The coarseness appears to be an effective insect feeding deterrent.” Quinn is an entomologist working with Texas Parks and Wildlife.

Many thanks to Leroy Overstreet, manager of Green Island, and Bill Horton, for allowing my visit there. It is a beautiful island set aside as a nesting sanctuary for colonial waterbirds. Roseate spoonbills were abundant during our early September visit. Recent rain has transformed the often-dry island to a verdant paradise of green. With baby chicks already fledged and departed,

our presence there disrupted little. One magnificent great blue heron kept moving about. Was he monitoring our movements, or did conversation disturb his late morning nap?

Revegetation efforts have helped to guard this island habitat from erosion damage. In the aftermath of plentiful rain, revegetation is an appropriate topic.

This is an excellent time to transplant things and to plant seeds, especially wildflowers.



Wild Bird Center (428-2211) and Frank Gonzales of Harlingen have teamed up to create a 2<sup>nd</sup> blend of wildflower seed especially suited to the area. This newest blend includes daisies of various kinds and colors, a legume known as Golden Dalea, bright-red Drummond Phlox, Winecup, Texas Bluebonnet, Lemon Mint, and more, for a total of 15 species.

“Plant them and they will come!” This blend should bring delight to the hearts of hummingbirds, butterflies, and children of all ages.

If you have no luck with sowing directly into the ground, try seeding into pots for later transplant. Happy planting! We’d better make use of this rainwater while we can.

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

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