All official events are still cancelled by the State Board

This beautiful Cenizo was bought at our plant sale last Oct. The other five that I bought have lovely, pale lavender flowers. But this one, wow! Just look at that magenta. I think I like this bold beauty the best.
Kathy Saucier wrote last week about “tiny plants you should notice”, so I thought that this week I would add to her argument with another semi-small plant that is often overlooked but quite striking on its own.

In vegetative competition, tall plants win out in the battle for light, space, and water unless the smaller plant evolves to take advantage of successional opportunities (ex. grows and blooms in early spring) or finds an ecological niche in small grass prairies or rocky interstices.

The “70 mph” or more showy wildflowers get all the attention, but here’s another short wildflower for you to get down on your knees and appreciate, and it will be worth the effort.

**Gray Golden Aster, aka Hoary False Goldenaster** (*Heterothecus canescens*) is one of 22 species in its genus and part of the huge family of Asteraceae of which I wrote about two weeks ago.

*Heterothecus* refers to the difference of seed cases within the genus and *canescens* means growing white or hoary which is quite apropos for this species as you will learn.

This plant was originally collected by the early Swiss collector, Jean-Louis Berlandier, and classified/re-classified by many of early prominent botanists of the time including Nuttal, Torrey, and Gray with 4 different names in 10 years. This was common in the early days of botanical taxonomy before there were convenient methods of communications between academics and new species were pouring in from various collectors and locations. The species was named *Chryopsis canescens* for over 100 years until the great SMU botanist and herbarium director, Lloyd Shinners,
re-classified in the H. genus in 1951. This example demonstrates the vicissitudes of botanical nomenclature even to this day.

**Description:** Gray Golden Aster is a low-growing annual or perennial depending on how far north it inhabits, but it is mostly perennial in central Texas and semi-evergreen to fully deciduous dependent on the severity of the winter. It forms a rounded mat of dense blue-silvery foliage up to 1 foot tall by 1 foot wide. The hairy, hoary foliage (how’s that for alliteration!) resembles a miniature Artemisia or Gregg’s Dalea and provides nice contrast in color and texture in the landscape. In a garden setting, it would make a great groundcover or border or a nice fill-in plant in a rock or cactus garden. Cut the foliage back in winter to the basal rosettes. *This plant is considered to have moderate deer resistance.*

The flowers of this aster unsurprisingly resemble the aster form and carry both yellow ray and disk flowers about ¾ inch wide. One plant will carry multiple blooms per plant from June to September and which pop-out nicely in contrast with the gray foliage. The Gray Golden Aster functions as a good nectar source for butterflies or bees.
**Growing and Propagation:** I have never seen this plant in the nursery trade or for sale from seed providers. Reportedly, it can be easily propagated from soft wood cuttings or from seeds. It prefers well-drained soil, of either a gravelly or sandy type. Give it full sun, but water it only lightly.

**Distribution:** Gray Golden Aster grows in zones 4a-8b from southern Kansas and Missouri into central Texas and west to the eastern New Mexico. It does well in our areas and in the Davis Mountains of west Texas where I have seen it growing. Locally, it resides on the sandstone bench along the Vista Loop trail and along the Live Oak Trail near the dam in LBJ Municipal Park. Although in the past, I have appreciated this plant in gravelly niches of its rocky native habitat, I have personally only given this plant much attention this past year as a potential landscape plant. So, go out to the park and admire it, and maybe some of you will even give it a go in your landscape. Either way, it’s a nice addition to your mental herbarium for personal enjoyment.

**LOL, Lonnie!** My “mental herbarium”?! I’m afraid that my mental herbarium is just a weed patch. So it is nice that we have scholarly types like you and Kathy Saucier to write these great articles.

Look at this strange little plant that came up voluntarily in the mulch of my nature trail. I’ve noticed this plant before in the meadow, and now I have several of them along the trail. It is very similar to Slender-Lobe Passionflower (pg 105 Wildflowers of Texas Hill Country, by Marshall Enquest) but not exactly the same.

I’m sure many of our “Wise Ones” know what it is, so one of you please let me know. If any of you want some, let me know that too and I’ll watch for seed pods.
This photo shows what lengths we dog owners must go to, to protect our plants. Those two rowdy, pound mutts kept walking on my only standing, red cypress. (In all fairness, it wasn’t standing, it was sprawling.) So I poked the long spires up thru the table top to hold them in place and out of the way. So far it is working. I plan to let them seed out and collect and scatter the seeds along my fence lines. It’s not the prettiest presentation of the plant, but we do what we have to do.

Reach Out
Please forward the video links below to any of your friends and neighbors who might need some help with their landscapes. And don’t forget to invite them to join our chapter. Sometimes a personal invitation makes all the difference. You might also drop the hint that we have a “members only” plant sale coming up on October 1. If they sign up by September 15 they would get the plant list emailed to them and be able to place their order.
Al has updated the care for the *Cymbidium* orchid. Until we figure out how to slip a slide into the presentation, we’ll add his further thoughts here.

“The *Cymbidium* orchid can get infested with white spots that are known as scale; a small insect that can kill the host plant. When the scale becomes noticeable you want to isolate the plant from your other orchids and start treatment to control the scale. I used rubbing alcohol on a cloth and rubbed it on the leaves where infested. This is not very satisfactory since the alcohol tends to dissolve the waxy layer on the leaves causing them to dry out. A better method is to use warm soapy water and wash the leaves carefully. Be sure to rinse the leaves thoroughly to remove any soap. Several treatments may be required.”

**Bergman Ranch Tour**

**Still On For Fall:**

**Plant sale – Thursday, Oct. 1**

It will be held at Gilbriar Gazebo with COVID-19 precautions. As the date gets closer we will list the precautions in the email that has the Available Plant List. As always, the plant list will be emailed to you a few days before your order deadline. It is possible that some things that are listed may no longer be available by the time your order is received. It is important than you get your order in quickly once you receive the list. So please be thinking now of what plants you will want.

**NLCP 1 class - Saturday Oct. 17**

Taught virtually by Mary Frushour, Kathy Saucier & Paula Stone. This class is open to the public, too. Can you think of friends or neighbors who could benefit from it? If so, please recommend it to them.
Check out the resources on our website https://npsot.org/wp/fredericksburg/
Thanks Denise Coulter for maintaining the website and sending out these newsletters for me.

Photos that accompany articles are supplied by article author unless otherwise noted.

Paula Stone, Pres.
Fredericksburg Chapter
Native Plant Society of Texas