

## The Weekly Plant

### 14 February 2016

*There are three plants this week!*

**Common names:** wedgeleaf draba

**Scientific name:** *Draba cuneifolia*<sup>1</sup>

**In our Community:** in drainage across from mailbox of lots 169-172

**Discussion**

This early spring wildflower is tiny - the one pictured to right is only 1.5 inches tall! Wedgeleaf draba is found in the southern half of the US mainly west of the Mississippi River (Illinois and Kentucky list it as endangered)<sup>2</sup>. It is a plant of open and disturbed spaces.



Left: flowers and fruit of wedgeleaf draba. Note the notches in the leaves.

A member of the mustard family (Brassicaceae), wedgeleaf draba has four white petals, each with a notch. The fruit is flattened, slightly curved, and less than 0.5 inch long. The wedge-shaped leaves are 0.5 inch long and may have 1 or 2 notches on the side (think mitten with its thumb). The whole plant is hairy - the leaves, the flower stalk, the fruit.

Like many of our annual spring wildflowers, there is little information about this plant. It can eventually grow to about 8 inches and, if abundant, cover the ground like a white carpet.



**Common names:** two plants: strigose bird's foot trefoil; foothill deervetch

**Scientific name:** *Acmispon strigosus*; *Acmispon brachycarpus*<sup>3</sup>

**In our Community:** in drainage across from mailbox of lots 169-172

Growing only an inch or two high, both of these annual wildflowers can spread over the ground, forming a foot-wide mat (ours are about 6" wide now). Because the bright yellow "pea" flowers appear for several weeks, both flowers and fruit can be seen at the same time.

These plants are very similar and are growing right next to each other. If you want to get down close, here's how you'll be able to tell them apart:

*Strigose bird's-foot trefoil* - leaves with 5-9 plump leaflets, each appearing folded down the middle; yellow flowers held on a short stalk; fruit an inch long and curved at the tip.

*Foothill deervetch* - leaves with 4 leaflets, often appearing as 3 on one side, 1 on the other, not plump, not folded; flowers yellow often tinted with orange, held close to the leaves, not on a stalk; fruit half an inch long, not curved but with short beak on end bent at an angle.



<sup>1</sup> [Tropicos](#) is source of scientific name.

<sup>2</sup> [per Southwest Desert Flora website](#)

<sup>3</sup> [The Jepson Manual](#) is the source of currently accepted scientific name. Both plants were formerly in the genus *Lotus*.

Far right: flower and fruit of strigose birds-foot trefoil. Note the curved fruit.

Right: comparison of foothill deervetch (left) and trefoil. A leaf of each plant is circled. Note the flower stalk on the trefoil.

