

## The Weekly Plant 7 February 2016

**Common names:** no common name

**Scientific name:** *Matthiola parviflora*<sup>1</sup>

**In our Community:** There is a plant in flower across the road from lot 137

### Discussion

This plant is a mystery. *Matthiola parviflora*, a native of the Mediterranean region, appeared near Tucson in the early 2000s, the first recorded sighting of the plant in the Western Hemisphere<sup>2</sup>. No one knows how it got here. I first photographed the plant in Academy Village in spring, 2012. It has remained localized to an area on Langtry near lot 77 until this year, when I found it growing with Sahara mustard on Galileo.

*Matthiola parviflora* (hereafter *Matthiola*), a winter annual, is usually flowering by early February. Recent work at University of Arizona<sup>3</sup> suggests that this plant is “well established near Tucson, Arizona, with a significant potential for spread.”



However, we are still at the very early stages of invasion by this plant, especially in the Village. Please help us control it by pulling it when you see it. Here's how you can recognize *Matthiola*:

-*Matthiola* begins flowering when only a few inches high. By the time it is producing fruit it can reach to nearly a foot.

-The leaves are light-medium green, several inches long, lobed or toothed along the edges. Unfortunately, many of our native, desirable spring wildflowers have similar leaves. Please DO NOT pull the plant at this stage.

-The flowers are light blue-to-purple, with 4 rounded petals.

-Unique to *Matthiola* species<sup>4</sup> is the fruit. It is about 3” long, slender, with two horns on the end (sometimes described as a “dolphin’s tail”). If you see the two horns, you know it is *Matthiola*.

You can find more photos on these websites:

- [Firefly Forest](#)
- [University of Arizona](#)

Dana Backer, Restoration Ecologists with Saguaro National Park, says park staff are considering *Matthiola* invasive and are removing it when they find it, pulling it rather than using a hula hoe.

I encourage you to also pull this potentially invasive plant when you find it. If you need assistance, please feel free to contact me.

<sup>1</sup> Tropicos is the source of the currently accepted scientific name.

<sup>2</sup> [The Southwest Naturalist](#), Jonathan Horst, et al and [fireflyforest.com](#) article

<sup>3</sup> [The Southwest Naturalist](#), Jonathan Horst, et al

<sup>4</sup> The commonly grown *Matthiola* species in our area is a fragrant garden annual known as night-scented stock. It is native to Eurasia, but I have seen it advertised for sale as a “wildflower”. It is easily grown from seed and has naturalized.

Top: *Matthiola* is low-growing. The first flowers may be hidden under the leaves.

Top left: The flowers have 4 rounded petals (think egg-shaped). The flower is about 0.5 inches wide. The leaves are long and narrow with several lobes or teeth evenly spaced along the edges.

Bottom left: The fruit is very thin, about 3 inches long. Look for the two horns (arrow) at the end of the fruit