

## The Weekly Plant Extra 18 February 2015

**Common names:** Texas rue, Texas desert rue, Dutchman's breeches, rue of the mountain, ruda del monte

**Scientific name:** *Thamnosma texanum*<sup>1</sup>. The name is frequently misspelled on the web and in literature as *Thamnosma texana*.

**TAV location:** Walk the connector trail that goes first between the Winders' and Moore's houses, then between the Goodman's and Nitzberg's houses. Behind the Nitzberg's house the trail zigzags down into the wash, then levels out, then drops steeply down into the watercourse (a drop of only 2-3 ft). Immediately before you go down into the watercourse look to the left. The plant is to the right of a small pile of rocks and immediately in front of a small cholla cactus.

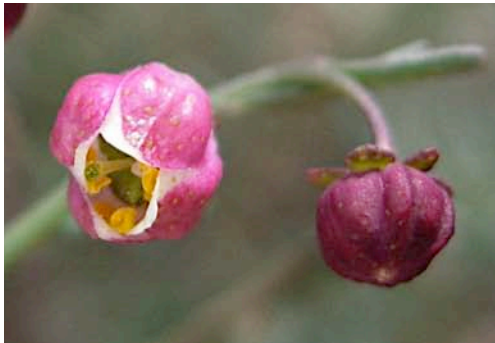
### Discussion:

Weekly Plant EXTRAS are descriptions of plants you cannot see from our roadways. However, if you walk our roads at all, you can probably make the short trip along the connector trail to see this Week's Plant. I've seen it several places along the blue trail between Langtry and Galileo as well.

I walk this connector trail fairly frequently and have never noticed this plant. I don't know if it is the first time in three years that the plant has flowered, if the flowers last for such a short time that I never walked the trail at exactly the right time, or if the new glasses are really making a difference. Now, Texas rue will be on my look-for list every spring.



Left: close-up views of the flower (1/4"). Above: two-lobed fruit



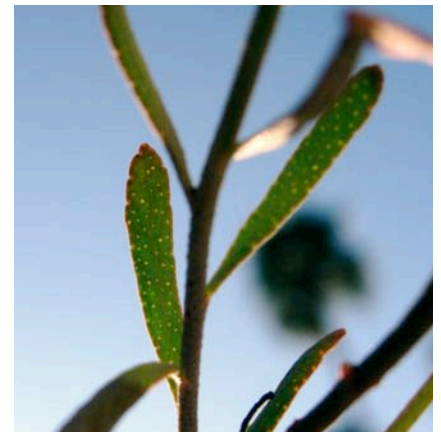
The identification of Texas rue required an inquiry to my friend at the UA Herbarium. Other Villagers couldn't ID it and it is not in any of my plant books.

Texas rue is a Chihuahuan Desert plant from New Mexico, Texas, and Mexico that finds its way into most of Arizona. It is a foot-tall shrub that prefers soils with limestone, which is why it is found in the Colossal Cave area<sup>2</sup>.

There's not much information about this delicate little plant. In Arizona, the flowers, no more than 1/4" long, are pink and white. Texas rue found east of the 100th meridian has yellow flowers. There are four petals held in a bell. The fruit is two-lobed, the shape reminiscent of Dutchman's breeches, another common name for the plant. The leaves

are narrow and about 1/2" long. If you hold them up to the light you'll see tiny yellow dots, the scent glands that give the plant a faintly citrus smell. You can see tiny glands on the stems and flower stalks also.

Texas rue is in the rue family (Rutaceae). The best known members of this family are citrus - oranges, lemons, etc. Several species of this family are used medicinally, including the rue grown in herb gardens, or added to perfumes. Sichuan pepper is the fruit of a tree in this family.



Right: the half-inch leaves are long and slender.  
Far right: the dots on the leaves are the scent glands.

<sup>1</sup> Tropicos is the source of the currently accepted scientific name.  
<sup>2</sup> The Pima County Soil Survey indicates the soil in Academy Village contains limestone.