

The Weekly Plant

10 Nov 2013

Common names: dogweed; golden fleece, dyssodia, or dogweed; fiveneedle prickleleaf; fiveneedle fetid marigold

Scientific name: *Thymophylla pentachaeta*¹ (formerly *Dyssodia pentachaeta* - you will still see this name in garden books and on plant labels in nurseries)

TAV location:

Very widespread throughout Village in disturbed areas. Look for it right next to the curb in undeveloped areas (for example, across Langtry from lots 133&136), in mulched areas of your own yard (and in the narrow soil area between curb and sidewalk between the Villa and employees' drive) and in areas that receive a little extra water (under some of the irrigated trees along the west side of southern Langtry).

Discussion:

Golden dogweed is a free-flowering, free-seeding perennial native to Arizona and to the states that border Mexico. Rarely reaching over 6-8" high, it flowers throughout the warm season and into winter. I've even had a few blooms when we had snow on the ground.

Golden dogweed belongs to the Asteraceae (Aster family). Many plants in this family have yellow flowers and are hard to identify. Not so this plant. Look for small flowers, never more than 1/2" in width, with petals that look short and stubby in comparison to the flower size. The leaves are dark green. The opposite leaves are divided into several slender threads that can look almost ferny. They are soft to the touch.

If you are still uncertain, look at the underside of the flower head. You'll see reddish dots that are oil-containing glands. There are also glands on the leaves but they are harder to see because the leaves are so narrow.

Golden dogweed is sold at some garden centers. It can be used as a groundcover or allowed to naturalize. We are lucky since most yards have this plant springing up all on its own. I am seeing numerous seedlings right now, some even flowering with only 2" of growth. It's easy to collect seeds and scatter them where you want plants. Select a spot that gets a little extra water - a low spot or near some irrigation. This plant will take a bit of care in your garden. It is a perennial, but short-lived. Be prepared for it to die out in one place and need to be removed, then pop up in another. It can look a bit tattered after a long growing season. The maturing seedheads are dark and not particularly attractive (see top photo). The foliage can blacken. If this happens, simply cut off the unattractive parts (below and Weekly Plant 4 Aug 2013, page 3). Leave any new growth at the base of the plant. I'd suggest cutting back plants you think are dead, rather than pulling them out, just in case the plant isn't really dead.

¹ The Plant List (Kew Botanic Garden) is the source for the currently accepted name: <http://www.theplantlist.org/>



Note red dots at the base of the unopened flower. Leaf oil glands are visible in just the right light.



Left and center: A plant with end-of-the-season dieback can be made more attractive by simply cutting it back. Right: New growth often appears at the base of the plant.

Photos and text by Mary Welch-Keesey