

The Weekly Plant

7 April 2013

Common names: white-stemmed paper flower, yellow paper daisy

Scientific name: *Psilostrophe cooperi*¹.

TAV location:

At south end of orange trail. On southern Langtry go to the north end of the rail fence. There you will find several steps cut into the slope, which is the beginning of the orange trail. The plant is to the right of the trail at the level of the first step. You do not have to climb the slope to get to it. Going north on the same side of the street there is a much larger plant on the slope, about 30 feet north. Additionally, there are numerous plants along the orange and blue trails.



Discussion:

Paper flower is a very common wild, native plant in our area, surviving on natural rainfall. This perennial is a great addition to landscape areas that receive little if any irrigation². Paper flower has yellow flowers that gradual turn white as they age. This gives the plant an extra-long bloom time, often appearing to have a mixture of white and yellow flowers. The form is rounded, up to about 18 inches high but spreading wide, to 2 feet or more.

This is another DYC³, a plant with a yellow daisy flower, but this one is not at all hard to identify. It has both yellow ray flowers (at the edge of the flower head, with showy petals) and yellow disc flowers (in the center of the flower head, with small petals). The petals of the ray flowers are large, have 3 lobes, and are reflexed (bending back toward the flower stalk). Each flower head has only a few ray flowers and there aren't very many disc flowers either. The flower head is held singly, rather than on a flower stalk with several flower heads. This distinguishes white-stemmed paper flower from all other *Psilostrophe*.

It is often easy to recognize white-stemmed paper flower, even without the flowers. The stems are very white, covered with hairs that look almost like felt. The leaves are long, thin, and alternate, greener than the stems but also covered with white hairs.

Find a paper flower near you and watch it for several weeks to see how the flowers change, yet still remain ornamental.



Top: yellow and white flowers, note how each flower head is held singly. Bottom: flower head with 5 ray flowers and several disc flowers. The disc flowers have 5 small, pointed petals.



L: the white stems easily identify this plant.
R: closeup of white stem and greener leaves.

¹ GRIN Online Database is the source of the currently accepted scientific name.

² New plantings will need irrigation until the plants become established.

³ DYC stands for "D*** Yellow Composite". The flower head is a "composite" of many small flowers. The plant family used to be called Compositae but is now known as the Asteraceae. The word "D***" is used because they are plentiful, look alike, and hard to identify.