

The Weekly Plant

11 Nov 2012

Common names: Texas ageratum, mistflower, palmleaf mistflower, palmleaf thoroughwort, butterfly mist, Gregg's mistflower

Scientific name: *Conoclinium dissectum* (formerly *Conoclinium greggii* and *Eupatorium greggii*, both still commonly used)¹

TAV location:

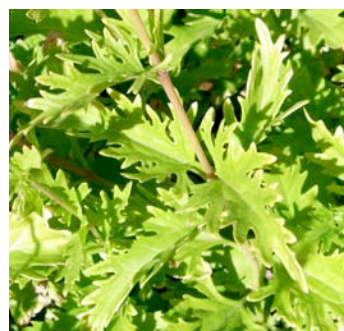
There are several on the Villa grounds. Simply walk along the sidewalk in front of the Villa - you're sure to see one.

Discussion:

Many of you know "ageratum", the plant grown as an ornamental, flowering annual in many parts of the country. There are two closely related perennials, with similar blue flowers, that go by common names such as perennial ageratum (*Conoclinium coelestinum*, eastern US) and Texas ageratum (our Weekly Plant). Both are also sometimes known as "mistflower", a reference to the blue halo created by the flowers.

The technical differences between *Ageratum*, *Conoclinium*, and *Eupatorium* (the genus in which the *Conoclinium* were previously placed) are minute and almost impossible to photograph. The *Conoclinium*s and the *Eupatorium*s I know (mainly from eastern US) all flower late summer into fall and are enormously attractive to butterflies and other insects.

Texas ageratum is native to Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and northern Mexico. It does not appear to be native to the Rincon Mountains², but is native to Pima County³. The leaves are opposite, with many lobes (dissected). Several flower heads are held together in small clusters. Each flower head is a collection of tiny flowers, a clear indication this plant is in the Aster family. (Do we get to call this a LBC - lovely blue composite?) Texas ageratum is low-growing but wide. Tucson Botanical Garden recommends watering this plant once a week during the growing season⁴. This is especially important if the plant is in full sun. Be prepared for it to disappear in winter. Texas ageratum is an herbaceous perennial. It does not form woody stems that survive from year to year (as a woody perennial would) but instead dies to the ground and regrows each spring.



L: opposite, dissected leaves.

R: flower head, note 5 petals of the few open flowers.



L: bee on a eastern US *Eupatorium* (Joe Pye weed). Note how similar the flowers are to Texas ageratum. C: Fatal metalmark on Texas ageratum. R: Queens on Texas ageratum. Male Queens appear to be especially attracted to this plant.

Photos and text by Mary Welch-Keesey

¹ Flora of North America (<http://floranorthamerica.org/families>) is the source of the currently accepted scientific name.

² Checklist for Saguaro National Park - Rincon Mountain District (<http://swbiodiversity.org/seinet/checklists/checklist.php?cl=2537>)

³ Biota of North America Project (<http://www.bonap.org/BONAPmaps2010/Conoclinium.html>)

⁴ <http://www.tucsonbotanical.org/desertconnections/page-display-2.php?plantid=76>