

Weekly Plant Photo Edition

22 March 2020

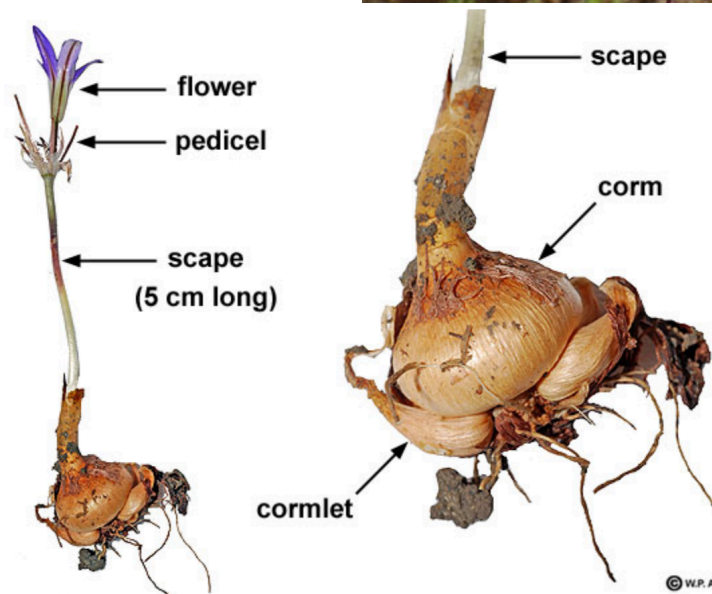
Common Names: Blue dicks, covenna, grass nuts, Indian hyacinth, wild hyacinth, fool's onion, crow poison

Scientific name: *Dichelostemma capitatum* (formerly *Dichelostemma pulchellum*)

In our community: Two spots: At south end of Langtry, near the wooden fence. Look for the green tape tied to the fence. The plant is between the fence and the curb. Also, along the access to the Orange Trail across from driveway of lots 133-136 (look for the bench labeled "Pake"). The plants are to the right, marked with green plastic tape.

Discussion: Blue dicks is another of our invisible-until-it-flowers wildflowers. Each plant has only 2 or 3 leaves that, though more than 12 inches long, are slender and tend to lie along the ground, often hidden under surrounding plants. Then, suddenly you'll see a leafless 2 foot tall stem with a cluster of lovely blue-purple flowers, each with 6 petals. If this reminds you of onions, you'd be right. The plants are related but, instead of growing from a bulb like onion, blue dicks grow from a corm, a sort of squished bulb that is solid inside instead of having rings. This corm is perennial, so the best place to see blue dicks this year is where you saw them last year.

Blue dicks are native to the desert southwest and western US as far north as Oregon. The underground corms are dug and eaten by wildlife. Native Americans also ate this plant, always leaving enough cormlets (small, immature corms) to ensure a good harvest the next year.



Above, left to right: Flower detail, flower cluster along Langtry, the long, slender leaves of the same plant.

Left: The corm structure of *Brodiaea terrestris*, a plant closely related to blue dicks. Though blue dicks produce seeds, the cormlets are an additional way the plant reproduces. Each cormlet will grow to a mature, flowering corm. A "scape" is a leafless flower stalk. The scapes of blue dicks are up to 24 inches, or about 60 cm, long. Graphic from:

<https://www2.palomar.edu/users/warmstrong/figueroa1.htm>