

TOURNEFORTIA HIRSUTISSIMA (BORAGINACEAE)
NEW TO THE FLORA OF TEXAS

Alfred Richardson

*Department of Biological Sciences
The University of Texas at Brownsville
80 Fort Brown
Brownsville, Texas 78520, U.S.A.*

W. Ken King

*1008 W 5th Street
Weslaco, Texas 78596, U.S.A.*

ABSTRACT

Tournefortia hirsutissima (Boraginaceae) is reported for extreme south Texas, a new record for the state of Texas.

RESUMEN

Tournefortia hirsutissima (Boraginaceae) se cita del extremo sur de Tejas, es el primer registro para el estado de Tejas.

Tournefortia hirsutissima L. (Chiggery Grapes, Mata de Nigua) is native to various parts of Mexico, Central and South America, and the West Indies (Standley 1924). It also grows in Florida (Wunderlin & Hansen 2003) but has not been reported for Texas (Turner et al. 2003). It is a sprawling and climbing shrub reaching at least 5 meters in height (Fig. 1). The stems and leaves are covered with stiff hairs which can cause irritation to the skin. The leaves are alternate, the blades ovate to elliptic and up to 15 cm long. The flowers, in branching cymes, have a fragrance somewhat like that of orange blossoms. The corollas are white, actinomorphic, ca. 1 cm broad, the tubes 4–5 mm long. The fruit are white drupes ca. 8 mm broad, each with one small black dot where the style has fallen, and containing 2–4 mericarps (Fig. 2).

Tournefortia hirsutissima has been given many common names in different countries. Both of the two that we have listed refer to the belief that rubbing an infected area with a leaf will kill or remove chiggers. The Spanish name means “chigger killer.”

The plant was called to our attention by Mary Ann and David Sato through a mutual friend, Mike Heep. It was growing on the Sato property along Hudson Street in San Benito, Cameron County, Texas. We visited their home in March and April of 2007. The liana was growing next to the road. It was very large, covering an estimated 7 meter square area and growing 5 meters into the trees. Three more individuals were growing at the back of the property. The Satos said that they had not planted them and that they grew without any care. We suspect that the plants arrived by natural means, probably as seeds deposited by birds. Llera and El Encino, two collection sites in Tamaulipas, Mexico, are less than 400 km from San Benito.

Since the plant we examined was so robust, flowering and fruiting freely, it seems that it will gradually spread to other areas, at least in years when rains are abundant. It appeared to be old enough to have survived some of our drier years, although its native habitat generally receives more rainfall than Cameron County. It probably would not be so lush during the dry times.

Voucher specimens: **TEXAS. Cameron Co.:** S of San Benito on Sam Houston, E on Hudson. One large sprawling liana, at roadside, occupying an area about 20' × 20', climbing 15' high into trees, 31 Mar 2007, *Richardson and King* 3315 (BRIT, TEX); S of San Benito on Sam Houston, E on Hudson, one large sprawling liana, at roadside, occupying an area about 20' × 20', climbing 15' high into trees, 9 Apr 2007, *Richardson and King* 3320 (BRIT, TEX).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank Mary Ann and David Sato and their friend Mike Heep for noticing and bringing *Tournefortia hirsutissima* to our attention. Monique D. Reed and an anonymous reviewer provided helpful reviews.



FIG. 1. *Tournefortia hirsutissima*. Flowers.



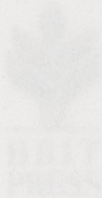
FIG. 2. *Tournefortia hirsutissima*. Fruit.

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