

THE SENECIO ON THE COASTAL DUNES OF TEXAS

V. L. CORY¹

At various times my friend and co-worker, Mr. H. B. Parks, has told me about a different *Senecio* growing on the coastal islands of Texas and has sent me specimens from various places. His material from Flour Bluff near Corpus Christi, collected October 18, 1936, caused me to draft a preliminary description of the plant and, even now, the type specimen is designated as No. 27538, which is of that collection. This specimen is deposited at the Gray Herbarium. However, in November, 1940, it was my privilege to visit, in the pleasurable company of Mr. Parks, the area in which this plant grows and to collect the plant myself at Del Mar, Boca Chica, at the mouth of the Rio Grande, along Red Fish Bay in Willacy County, and on Padre Island in Kleberg County. Representative material of these collections have been sent to various herbaria. To me this plant is closely associated with my companion of this trip, and I take pleasure in naming it in his honor.

SENECIO RIDDELLII T. & G., var. **Parksii**, new var. Plant perennial, suffruticose, glabrous, 1 meter high or less, and the spread frequently equalling the height; stems more or less woody, 1 cm. broad more or less at the base, diffusely branched; branches ascending-spreading, very leafy; leaves succulent, drying brown or black, up to 10 cm. long and 8 cm. broad, pinnately divided into 5-9 linear, elongate, entire divisions, which are acute and as much as 5 cm. long and 3.5 mm. broad; heads 12 mm. high and about as broad, radiate, in a compound corymb, each branch of the stem usually with 20 heads or more; branches of the inflorescence axillary; peduncles 2-4 cm. long, 0.5 mm. broad or less, ascending-spreading, subtended by linear-lanceolate or narrower bracts that are up to 5 mm. long, calyculate with subulate scales, and bearing solitary heads; involucre campanulate, 1 cm. high, calyculate with subulate scales, glabrous; involucre bracts 12-17, linear-lanceolate or broader, scarious-margined; ray-flowers about 8; ligules spatulate, about 9 mm. long and 3 mm. broad; disk-flowers about 35, the corolla-tube 5 mm. long, the throat and limb 4 mm. long; achenes 2 mm. long or slightly more; slender, subterete, hirtellous; pappus copious, white, slightly longer than the corolla of the disk flowers.

SENECIO RIDDELLII T. & G., var. **Parksii**, var. nov. Planta

¹ Acting Chief, Division of Botany, Texas Agr. Expt. Station, A. and M. College of Texas.

perennis, suffruticosa, glabra, ad 1 m. alta, saepius totidem lata; caulibus plus minusve lignescentibus, basi minusve 1 cm. crassis, valde ramosis; ramis adscendenti-patentibus valde foliosis; foliis carnosius, in sicco brunneis vel nigris, ad 10. cm. longis, 8 cm. latis, in lobos 5–9 lineares, elongatos, integros partitis, lobis acutis, ad 5 cm. longis, 3.5 cm. latis; capitulis 12 mm. longis totidemque latis, radiatis, in corymbo composito ordinatis, in ramulo quove ca. 20; inflorescentiae ramulis axillaribus; pedunculis 2–4 cm. longis, 0.4 mm. latis vel minoribus, flore singulo terminatis, patenti-adscendentibus, bracteis lineari-lanceolatis vel angustioribus ad 5 mm. longis, bracteis subulatis calyculantibus; involucri campanulatis, 1 cm. longis, bracteis subulatis calyculantibus, glabris; bracteis involucrialibus 12–17, lineari-lanceolatis vel majoribus, margine scariosis; floribus radialibus ca. 8; ligulis spathulatis, ca. 9 mm. longis, 3 mm. latis; floribus centralibus ca. 35, tubo 5 mm. longo, fauce cum limbo 4 mm. longis; acheniis 2 mm. longis vel paulo majoribus, gracilibus, subteretibus, hirtulis; pappo copioso, albo corallam florum centralium parum excedente.¹

The species and its variety are widely separated geographically and also in the elevation of their habitats. To my knowledge the two plants come closest together in the occurrence of the species at the base of Iron Mountain in Brewster County and of the variety on the coastal dunes in the vicinity of Corpus Christi, or 550 miles or more apart on a straight line. Roughly the elevations of these two localities are 4650 feet and 50 feet. One would suspect that neither one of these plants could grow in the habitat of the other. For the most part in Texas the species grows scatteringly in grass-lands of the High Plains and extends southward into the Trans-Pecos Area, where in recent years it has become wide-spread and has increased most markedly in abundance at elevations exceeding 4100 feet, as noted in driving down Limpia Canyon in the Davis Mountains recently, while the variety grows in extensive and frequently dense stands on dunes of the coastal islands and the adjacent mainland, in which places the grass-cover is deficient or lacking. On casual observation the variety suggests *S. longilobus*, and it does not suggest *S. Riddellii* due to their difference in habit of growth. The species has a plant consisting of a clump of several erect stems, except in the inflorescence not branched above the base,

¹ I wish to express grateful acknowledgment to Dr. Leon Croizart for valuable assistance given in the preparation of the latin description.

while the variety is a plant consisting of a single stem, diffusely branched throughout. The variety has succulent foliage, and the leaves and their divisions are larger than in the species. The plant dries green in the species and brown or black in the variety, and the growth above the base tends to become woody in the variety and remains herbaceous in the species. The two plants seem to merit some sort of separation botanically.

Both Dr. S. F. Blake and Dr. J. M. Greenman recognize this plant as *Senecio Riddellii*, and I am deeply indebted to them for their courteous assistance. Type specimen is designated as No. 27538, which was collected by H. B. Parks, October 18, 1936, at Flour Bluff, a place which no longer exists, for the dunes were razed to provide for the site of the U. S. Naval Training Station at Corpus Christi. The type specimen is deposited at the Gray Herbarium.

May we tell a story of this plant-collecting trip? The mouth of the Rio Grande is two miles below Boca Chica, or three miles below Del Mar. Mr. Parks and I drove on the hard-packed wet sand of the beach down to near the mouth of the river, and parked the car higher up in the edge of the dry sand while exploring the dunes for plants. Our vehicle was a new truck on its first trip. In backing out of the dry sand the car came to rest in the edge of the water with the right rear wheel lodged in the fork of a tree-trunk buried in the sand and it soon became obvious that we were helpless to move the truck either forward or backward. Soon it became dark and the tide was coming in, and we did not know how high it might rise; so we moved the load of plant specimens to a near-by dune and built a rousing bonfire from drift wood. We figured on saving the plant specimens at any rate. Then we sat in the car and enjoyed the bright moonlight on the waters of the Gulf of Mexico and wondered somewhat if the water would rise high enough to wash our car away. My wife, who had become alarmed at our failure to return to camp at Brownsville, twenty-six miles from Boca Chica, came out about midnight and sponsored a relief party which was successful; we took our supper at one o'clock in the morning at Brownsville and were thankful that at least one cafe there remained open all night. This story is in memory of our visit to the mouth of the Rio Grande.



Cory, V. L. 1943. "THE SENEIO ON THE COASTAL DUNES OF TEXAS." *Rhodora* 45, 164–166.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/14515>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/188934>

Holding Institution

Missouri Botanical Garden, Peter H. Raven Library

Sponsored by

Missouri Botanical Garden

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder.

License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>

Rights: <https://biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.