

Victoria County Master Gardener Association



ZEXMENIA: The blooming survivor

By Olivia Blanchard

Victoria County Master Gardener

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO BY OLIVIA BLANCHARD

A bouquet of Zexmenia

Several years ago, my husband and I were visiting Fredericksburg. Our room could be reached by walking on a sidewalk that included some steps. In the middle of a hot, summer day, I saw an orange-yellow blooming plant. The roots were nestled in a crack in the steps.

Of course, as a Master Gardener, I was curious and had to take a closer look to examine this daisy-like bloomer. The rough, hairy leaves and stems were noticeable and distinctive. What a survivor it was showing off its blooms. After some research, I identified the plant name *Wedelia* and was able to purchase it.

Plants are sold with botanical names, but labels often include common names. The botanical names include *Wedelia hispida*, *Wedelia texana*, and *Wedelia acapulcensis*. Common names include zexmenia, orange zexmenia, rough zexmenia, orange *Wedelia*, and Texas creeping oxeye. The word *hispida* denotes that the plant has a hairy, bristly leaf and stem surface.

In Texas, zexmenia are found in the Edwards Plateau, Corpus Christi, Rio Grande Valley, and Trans Pecos. The hot weather, low rainfall and varied soils could be home to this miracle plant in Victoria. Gardeners, myself included, have attached the phrase “miracle plant” to this versatile perennial.

Zones 8, 9, 10, and 11 have favorable conditions for zexmenia. In colder weather, this plant may die back to the ground. As the weather warms, the plant recovers. Long periods of warmer weather encourage continuous growth and it stays ever-green. Trimming in July, will leave the plant bushier.

Zone 9 in Victoria soils may have a sand, loam, clay, caliche, or limestone composition. This plant isn't too fussy with any of these types of soil. This daisy, however, is very fussy with soils that don't drain well. Rainfall can't be regulated, but good drainage is a must wherever zexmenia is planted. This plant is definitely a drought tolerant specimen after it is established.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO by Olivia Blanchard

Wedelia texana bush

Zexmenias is a distant relative of the rough and scratchy sunflower. As with other daisy relatives, the center of the flower contains the disc flowers that form the seeds. The outer colorful part of the bloom circles the middle. The inch and a half blooms are slightly reminiscent of sunflowers.

Blooming time spans May to December. The leafless, stiff stalks produce a single flower that lasts for days. The Wedelia Texana blooms continually, but not profusely. The plant itself is a good addition in the landscape.

In a sunny or part-shade locale, the plant forms a nice small shrub. Moisture and excess shade will make zexmenia sprawl. The average height is about 2 feet.

Plant singly or in a mass planting. Two feet should be allotted between plantings. Plant them in an area that the sprinkler water doesn't reach. Plants can be grown by planting seeds or propagated by semi-hard cuttings or layering the stems.

My zexmenia specimen was planted at the Victoria Educational Gardens in an area that has drip irrigation. While the plants bloomed profusely, they were large and sprawling.

Other zexmenias were found in the area and I transplanted them to a drier, sunnier area. The transplants were definitely more upright. It now survives being crowded with sand paper verbena. Both are Texas tough.

The summer blooms are food for pollinators. The border patch and Cassius blue butterflies need this host plant to lay their eggs.

What a great find I made when I explored this creeping oxeye and was able to purchase it at a nursery. I have enjoyed zexmenia for the dozen reasons listed and hope you will too.

The Gardeners' Dirt is written by members of the Victoria County Master Gardener Association, an educational outreach of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension – Victoria County. Mail your questions in care of the Advocate, P.O. Box 1518, Victoria, TX 77901; or vcmga@vicad.com, or comment on this column at VictoriaAdvocate.com.

REASONS TO CONSIDER WEDELIA TEXANA

Consider the Wedelia Texana because it:

1. Provides summer to fall color
2. Is a Texas native
3. Has a compact growth pattern
4. Is a little water sipper
5. Handles the sun's heat
6. Is a long-lived perennial
7. Is food for songbirds
8. Tolerates varied soils
9. Is easily maintained
10. Is a pollinator plant
11. Is a butterfly host plant
12. May become your "miracle" plant.

REFERENCES:

Wasowski, S and Wasowki, A. Native Texas Plants 1997, p. 220.

Garrett. H. Texas Gardening the Natural Way

<http://www.txsmartscape.com/plant-search/plant-details.php?id=405>

https://plants.usda.gov/DocumentLibrary/factsheet/pdf/fs_wete.pdf

<https://npsot.org/wp/boerne/publications/native-grown-articles/zexmenia-a-hardy-and-versatile-performer/>