

James O Baines



FACT SHEET

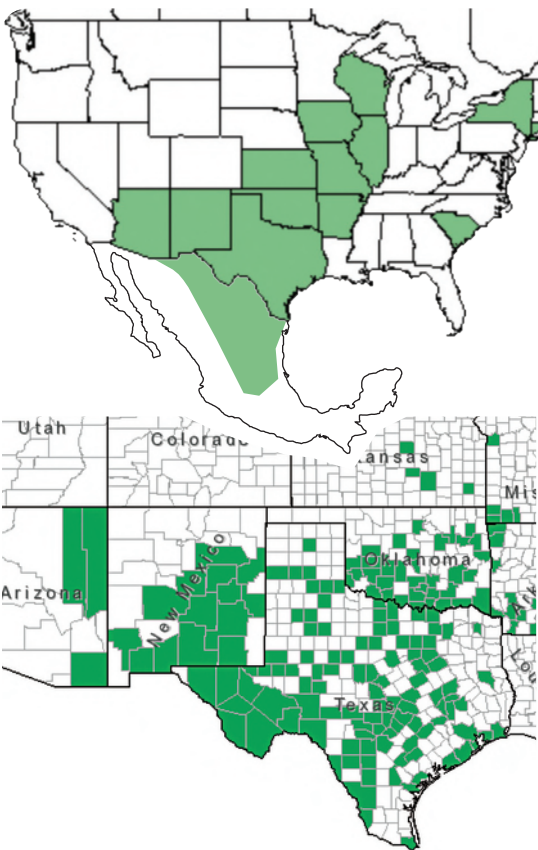
American Basketflower *Centaurea americana*

“In passing through north western Texas, the traveler will frequently find his path bordered for miles, by this flower mingled with sunflowers. The seed, falling from a single cluster of each will stock many acres, by being caught up, by passing wheels, or clinging to horses feet, they are planted, and thus become ornaments for the roadside.”

— Eliza Griffin Johnston Texas Wild Flowers 1821-1896



Distribution



ALTERNATE NAMES Shaving Brush, Straw-hat (Trans-Pecos Texas), Cardo de Valle (Spanish)
Scientific synonyms: *Centaurea mexicana*, *Plectocephalus americanus*.

DESCRIPTION American Basketflower, the only *Centaurea* native to North America, produces beautiful delicate blooms from May to August. Smooth, leafy stems are simple below and branched above. Leaves sessile, entire, and alternate. This erect annual can grow from 1.5 to 4 feet tall depending on rainfall and soil type. Large flower heads are 2 to 3 inches in diameter. Blooms have creamy centers ringed by lavender, pink or purple petals. Some flowers are found all white in the case of albinos. Name refers to basket weave pattern that holds lower portion of flower (known as phyllary), giving appearance of a bloom in a ready-made basket.

ADAPTATION Prefers well-drained sandy clay, loam or tight soils along roadsides, native prairies, meadows, drainages, disturbed soils, and overgrazed pastures in full sun. Sometimes found on wooded foothills at elevations up to 7,000 feet.

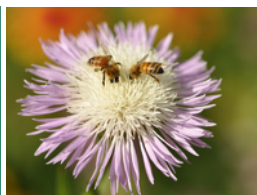
DISTRIBUTION Native in all 10 vegetational areas of Texas as designated by the USDA-NRCS. It is also found in the wild throughout much of North America from Texas, north to New York, west to Arizona, east to Carolinas and south into central Mexico.

USES | Pollinators Blooms of American Basketflower provide nectar high in sugar and amino acids. Pollen is high in protein. The plant is visited by a wide variety of hummingbirds, songbirds, butterflies, moths, bees, beetles and a host of other insects. Stamens are reported to suddenly contract and push pollen onto pollinator when touched. Bumblebees are major visitors to Basketflowers.

Favored Pollinator Plant



James Ownby



Jessica Womack



Jason Penney
Filet.com/cenaro



Seeding Rates

Rangeland	10 lbs / acre
Lawn & Garden	1 lb / 750 sf



Seedlings



TPWD invertebrate biologist Michael Warriner documented four species of bumblebees and several other solitary bee species nectaring on Basketflower in one North Texas prairie. A good choice for creating *Pollinator Buffer Zones*. When used as part of a farming strategy, abundant pollinators can increase overall agricultural production. Pollinators are needed for 90% of flowering plants and 30% of human food crops. Society depends on these industrious pollinators to provide services for the wide range of foods we eat. Pollinators are part of an intricate web supporting biological diversity in natural ecosystems.

Wildlife Excellent seed source for game birds such as bobwhite quail and song birds. Relatively large seeds resemble sunflowers, providing high nutritional value. When used as a cool-season cover crop then left for game birds, provides large amounts of nutritious seeds in summer before dove weed and most sunflowers mature.

Cover Crop Produces large quantities of pithy organic biomass, which can be turned under to enrich existing soil. Organic matter is readily converted to prepared seed bed in 30 days when adequate soil moisture is available.

Ornamental Our native *Centaurea* is planted for showy blooms. Contributes lavender color and a sweet honey fragrance to landscapes. Makes interesting cut flowers and suitable for dried flower arrangements. Same Genus as European Bachelor Buttons and Cornflower.

Ethnobotanic American Indians used native Basketflower for venomous bites, indigestion, jaundice, and eye disorders. *Centaurea* derives from Latin word centaurus. According to Greek Mythology, the noble Centaur Chiron is credited in teaching mankind about healing powers of herbs. He used *Centaurea* flowers to heal festering arrow wounds after battle. The seventeenth-century herbalist Nicholas Culpepper wrote, "It gently heals up running sores, both cancerous and fistulous, and will do the same for scabs of the head." Extensive stands of American Basketflower have been found on historical Bison kill-sites where people have camped for thousands of years. Many relevant factors remain unknown.

ESTABLISHMENT Easily started from seed planted in fall (Aug - Nov) at a depth of 3/8 - 1/2 inch. Hardy annual with low water requirements. Readily reseeds. High dormancy is easily overcome by late summer planting.

MANAGEMENT Since American Basketflower is not grazed by livestock or wildlife, plants will be prolific if moisture is adequate during late winter and spring. Growth begins in fall with plant maturing in early summer. Can dominate a site first year after summer burn on tallgrass prairies. Basketflower has no known diseases or pests and appears tolerant of droughts, floods and freezes.

Selecting Plants for Pollinators *Ecoregional Guides*, Pollinator Partnership & North America Pollinator Protection Campaign
 Fragrant Basket-Flowers Attract a Multitude of Insects, Particularly Bees, 2013 Jason Singhurst TPWD Magazine
 Range Plants of North Central Texas, 2014 Ricky J. Linex USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service
 The Forgotten Pollinators, 1996 Buchmann, Nabhan
 Useful Wild Plants of Texas Volume 4, 2015 Cheatham, Johnston, Marshall
 Edible and Medicinal Plants of the West, 1997 Gregory L. Tilford
 Native Plant Database, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center wildflower.org
 USDA Plants Database, Natural Resources Conservation Service Plants.USDA.gov
 Texas Entomology, TexasEnto.net | Texas Native Bee Co-op, NativeBeeCoop.com | BugGuide, bugguide.net