

4-Nerve Daisy, Slenderstem Bitterweed

One of the best new up-and-coming native perennial plants is the Hymenoxys, or 4 nerve daisy. This wonderful small daisy has been known to bloom all year long in Texas, especially in milder winters. The pale-green leaves are slender and form basally into rosettes, while the flower stems are bunched at the base sometimes forming a mass up to five to eight inches wide. The solitary flower heads occur at the end of silky, leafless stalks that grow only about one to one and half foot tall. They are commonly seen on rocky slopes in the Hill Country, along roadsides and pastures, but in they are well-suited to the domestic landscape.

The ever-blooming yellow daisy is both heat loving and drought tolerant. Four veins are visible on the flower petals, hence the common name. The tip of each yellow ray flower is three-toothed. An aggressive re-seeder, it quickly spreads and colonizes harsh areas of the garden. Yellow daisies held high above the foliage are very delicate looking which contradicts with the hardiness of this native.

Bed prep should be a lean, well-draining soil; however this daisy can handle sand, loam, caliche, or limestone. Once established, *H. scaposa* is very xeric needing little extra water. It is indispensable in the rock garden, xeriscape, or placed front of perennial borders (nine inches apart). Prune off spent blooms for clean desired look. Use it to interplant with other low border plants such as pink skull cap or bulbine. I like this plant simply because it blooms prolifically, is pest and disease resistant (as with most natives), and deer resistant. Fertilization is not required, although helpful once or twice a year, to supply the blooming periods. Propagate from seed.

Interesting tidbits: When the foliage of the hymenoxys is crushed they have a pungent bitter smell, hence another common name of 'bitterweed'.

