

Texas Gold Columbine - *Aquilegia chrysantha* subsp. *hinckleyana*

The beautiful 'Texas Gold' Columbine is a perennial favorite for shady areas in the landscape. Many varieties of these plants are native to North America, Europe, and temperate zones of Asia. However, the Texas variety is native to shady areas in Big Bend. The Texas columbine is a clump-forming perennial that is grown not only for its flowers but also for its fern-like foliage. The Texas columbine is frost hardy and grows in all Texas zones. The 'Texas Gold' prefers a sunny location with some shade to shield from the heat of the summer sun. This is a **Texas SuperStar™** plant and has great heat tolerance for a columbine, provided it has adequate summer protection and well-drained soil.



Unlike other columbines, 'Texas Gold' survives the summer, by sometimes going dormant, and starts actively growing in cool weather and rains of fall. They flower during late spring to reach a height of 2-3 feet. After growing a clump of fern-like foliage throughout the winter, they explode into blooms of fragrant, butter-yellow bell-shaped flowers with long, outward curving spurs, which appear to be hanging in air. 'Texas Gold' columbine must be grown in some shade, and can grow in dense shade but performs best with as much as half sun. The more shade there is, the less blooms there will be. The more sun there is, the more blooms there will be, but the foliage will burn or go dormant in the summer, however, this species tolerates heat and sun better than most other varieties. Plantings beneath deciduous trees, such as: Bald Cypress, Red Oak, Cedar Elm and Crape Myrtles are excellent as the trees provide shade during the hot summer months while allowing the winter sun to shine through while the plant is actively growing. Plant foliage can be cut to the ground (just above the crown from which foliage emerges) after bloom and seed drop have occurred. This helps the plant to generate new, lower-growing foliage for the summer months.

'Texas Gold' columbine is considered a weak perennial, because typically 10 or 20 percent die each year in an average bed. However it is a continuing re-seeder so fertile, well-drained beds remain covered in new plants. The columbine is easily grown in average, medium wet, well-drained soil. 'Texas Gold' tolerates a wide range of soils except heavy, poorly drained ones. It prefers rich, moist soils. To encourage reseeding, don't use heavy or deep mulch. The seed needs to come in contact with bare soil to encourage spread.

Remove flowering stems after bloom to encourage additional bloom. Keep soils uniformly moist after bloom to prolong attractive foliage appearance. When foliage declines, plants may be cut to the ground. Reseeds well in optimum growing conditions as long as flowers are not deadheaded. Replace old plants about every three years.

Problems:

- * Susceptible to leaf miner and aphids.
- * Foliage usually declines by mid-summer at which point it should be cut to the ground.
- * Deer love the flowers and tender growth.

Uses:

Borders, cottage gardens, open shade gardens or naturalized areas. Hummingbirds love the fragrant, yellow blooms.

Propagation:

Collect seeds after blooming.

Interesting tidbits:

Fern-like, basal green foliage with a bluish tinge is somewhat suggestive of meadow rue (*Thalictrum*), and leaf shape similar to maidenhair fern.

Aquilegia comes from the Latin word for eagle in reference to the flower's five spurs, which purportedly resemble an eagle's talon.