

Zexmenia – Reprinted from Friends of Hagerman NWR Weekly Blog, August 31, 2017 (by Helen Vargus)

Zexmenia is a Texas native perennial belonging to the native aster family. Visitors can view this plant growing in the Butterfly Garden at Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge. It is known under various names – Zexmenia, Orange Zexmenia, Hairy Wedelia, Wedelia, or Texas Creeping Ox-eye. Independent and native plant nurseries will most likely be the source for purchasing plants.



Zexmenia plants are not fussy about the type of soil for growth as long as it is well-drained. It can be grown in sand, loam, clay, caliche, and limestone. For the first year, it may require supplemental water as it becomes established. Zexmenia is drought tolerant and can exist on rainfall, but in faster draining soils it may require more water during drought conditions.

The 1 ¼" flowers of Zemenia have showy yellow to orange daisy like heads. The flowers vertically extend on long stems above the leaves. The first flowers in June are sparse, but as the temperatures rise they become more numerous. It will bloom from June to November. It will grow in sun or part shade. More shade will produce fewer flowers.



The upper stems are covered in stiff hairs pressed closely to the stem. They are rough to the touch. Both sides of the gray-green leaves are also rough and hairy which makes the plants deer and grasshopper

resistant. If your skin is sensitive to plant materials, you will want to cover your arms and hands when cutting back this plant.

In its natural habitat, this perennial shrub can get three feet tall. In my Texoma garden, it has never been more than 2 feet high. It will creep along the ground three to four feet from its base. Too much water or shade will make Zexmenia leggy, so it may need to be cut back periodically. It is not necessary to prune this plant during the growing season, but if the plant needs fuller growth or reshaping you can prune it back to half its height in July.



Zexmenia is nonaggressive and has proven to be well behaved in my garden. It can be propagated from fresh seed, semi-hardwood cuttings, or layering.



Even though Zexmenia is native from central to west Texas and south into Mexico, it will survive in North Texas. This plant has been growing in my Sherman garden for the past eleven years and has survived all kinds of winter weather. With the first

frost it goes dormant so there is nothing above ground that can get hurt. I leave the dead branches above ground in the winter as protection for the roots and as a source of seeds and cover for small birds. In late winter I cut it back to the ground and wait for new shoots to appear from the base.

Many types of bees and butterflies are attracted to the flowers of Zexmenia. It provides a nectar source for butterflies and pollen for various types of bees. It is a larval host for the Bordered Patch Butterfly.



Photo credits: Helen Vargus, Hagerman NWR