

# Saw-leaf Daisy

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We are right in the middle of the flowering season of saw-leaf daisy which runs from August through October. There is an excellent chance you have already noticed this native, annual forb on the roadsides, old disturbed areas or even scattered across pastures and margins of cropland fields. Saw-leaf daisy, *Grindelia papposa*, is a stout, stiffly erect single-stemmed plant, growing to 5 feet tall on smooth stems. There is branching only in the upper flowering portion of the stem which are whitish to light green in color. The leaves are  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 3 inches long, oblong, alternating up the stem, clasping the stem at the leaf base. The leaves appear thick, stiff with sharp, coarse teeth on the margins, while upper leaves becoming smaller. Flowers are bright yellow,  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inches across, growing on short stems crowded near the top of the stem. Seeds are smooth,  $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch-long and  $\frac{1}{16}$  inches in diameter, tan in color with several slender bristles attached. Saw-leaf daisy can be found in all vegetational areas with the exception of the Coastal Prairies and South Texas. Saw-leaf daisy is often confused with curlycup gumweed, a plant that has numerous stems, smaller flower heads, and leaves sticky to the touch.

Saw-leaf daisy is not palatable to livestock, deer or antelope so you will not notice any browsing upon this annual forb. However, its seeds are readily eaten by quail, dove and songbirds. These plants are often visited by many pollinator species and provides pollen and nectar during the hot days of late summer into early fall. This hot period often sees many wildflowers wither and dry up which makes it difficult for pollinators to find the pollen and nectar they require. This plant fits the old description of what is a weed but a plant whose virtues are not yet known. While it is of no value to livestock and deer, it has excellent value to the smallest forms of wildlife we manage for, the pollinators. Without pollinators we would have less plants upon the earth and less food available for all of us.

While we really don't actively manage for plants such as saw-leaf daisy which is known as a course plant frequenting disturbed areas in many soil types, we do value diversity in flowering plants for pollinators and for seed production used by game and songbirds. Rarely does saw-leaf daisy occur in dense stands requiring chemical treatment though it may become thick in bar ditches or abandoned lands. If cut or damaged early in the growth cycle, the plant will develop several branches producing many flower heads and seeds. This trait would be considered a negative by those trying to shred it out of existence but is a desirable trait for those managing for pollinators. Plant appreciation is an acquired trait, one that you must open your mind to broader values, especially when we talk about saw-leaf daisy. When you stand next to a flowering saw-leaf, look at the individual yellow-golden flower heads reflecting sunshine back into the sky and then say this plant has no value. All plants have value, sometimes we may not recognize that value, but I hope you now see the value in the lowly saw-leaf daisy.

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Photo captions:

1 Early summer growth of saw-leaf daisy prior to flowering.



2 The yellow outer ray flowers are matched with yellow disk flowers.



3 Leaves display the characteristic stiff, sharply toothed margin of all leaves with base clasping the stem.



4 Full size plants of saw-leaf daisy appear in a pasture.



5 Flower heads will be visited by numerous pollinators in search of pollen and nectar.



6 Flowers open over several weeks ensuring a long period of nectaring possibilities.



7 Seeds of saw-leaf daisy provide good nutrition to seed eating game and songbirds.

