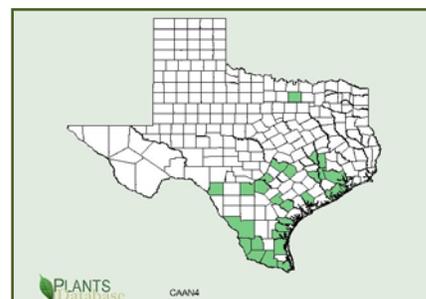


NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF TEXAS

Lindheimer Chapter

PLANT OF THE MONTH AUGUST, 2011

CHILE PEQUIN, *CAPSICUM ANNUUM*



USDA Range Map: Texas

Chili Pequin Flowers and Fruit

Chile Pequin is also known as Chile Petin, Chiltipín and Bird Pepper. It is found in Central and South Texas, and in various forms from the Atlantic coast down to Florida, west to Arizona in the US, and south through Mexico to Peru, as well as in the Caribbean. It is thought to be the ancestor of many of today's domesticated peppers, including Bell, Jalapeño, Poblano and Serrano, among others. It was used as a spice by Native Americans and is still used by some people in Texas and Mexico today. It reputedly makes a Hot Sauce more potent than Tabasco. While the Jalapeño is the official state pepper of Texas, Chile Pequin is the official state *native* pepper.

In Texas, Chile Pequin is found in moist, semi-shaded locations from the Edwards Plateau and Coastal Plains to South Texas. In South Texas it is evergreen and blooms and sets fruit throughout the year. In North Texas it will die back in winter but reappear in the spring (in spite of its scientific name, it is a perennial). In Central Texas its habit depends on the severity of the winter, but regardless, a pruning in early spring helps to keep it in shape. It makes a nice ornamental shrub about 2' tall and as wide, although it can grow to 5' in favorable conditions. It is especially attractive when covered by the small red peppers. Once established it is drought resistant, but may show some wilt in particularly dry conditions. An added benefit is its wildlife value (birds enjoy the small peppers, hence one of its common names). It is reportedly deer resistant, but remember when conditions are severe, deer are known to eat almost anything. It is easily started from seed in warm weather, and may be available at nurseries specializing in native plants.

An interesting discussion on this plant can be found in Matt Turner's book: "Remarkable Plants of Texas."