

# Plant Fact Sheet

## Erect Dayflower

### (*Commelina erecta*)

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Kingsville, Texas

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#### INTRODUCTION

Erect dayflower (*Commelina erecta* var. *angustifolia*) is a perennial, warm-season, herbaceous forb. A member of the spiderwort (commelinaceae) family, erect dayflower has also been known by the common names of widow's tears (Jones, 1982), narrowleaf dayflower (Everitt, Drawe, & Lonard, 1999), and hierba del pollo (Correll & Johnston, 1996). Erect dayflower is said to be named for the three Commelin brothers who were all Dutch botanists, although only two were productive in their field. Erect dayflower's two larger petals are said to represent the two Commelins who were published, while the third inconspicuous petal represents the unpublished brother (Ajilvsgi, 1991).

Erect dayflower has a showy blue flower that is attractive, but ephemeral and blooms from March to December in Texas (Jones, 1982). Erect dayflower starts out erect, becoming decumbent as it matures (Correll & Johnston, 1996). There are currently three varieties found in Texas: *erecta*, *deamiana*, and *angustifolia* (Correll & Johnston, 1996). The variety *angustifolia* is native to South Texas (Jones, 1982). Erect dayflower is often considered a weed (Correll & Johnston, 1996), especially in rice fields.

#### ADAPTED AREA

Erect dayflower can be found from Wisconsin south to Arizona and Florida, west to Wyoming, and throughout most of the eastern United States. It is common in the eastern two-thirds of Texas, but can be found throughout the state (Correll & Johnston, 1996). Erect dayflower can grow in both sandy and clayey soils in almost all habitats (Ajilvsgi, 1991). It is found along

streambanks, in gardens, on prairies, along roadsides, and in waste places (Jones, 1982).



#### USES

Erect dayflower is said to be a preferred food source for white-tailed deer (Chamrad & Box 1968; Drawe, 1968), so it is a good plant to consider when establishing deer food plots. Erect dayflower is also grazed by cattle (Everitt, Drawe, & Lonard, 1999). In addition, its seeds are eaten by bobwhite quail, white-winged doves and mourning doves (Everitt, Drawe, & Lonard, 1999). Erect dayflower can also be a good plant for native area restoration projects.

#### ESTABLISHMENT

Erect dayflower can be grown from cuttings or seed. An informal germination test conducted in the greenhouse at the PMC yielded a germination average of 87% with approximately twelve hours of daylight at 75-85°F and twelve hours of darkness at 50-60°F. Cuttings of dayflower had about an 80% survival rate with one node and three node stem cuttings. It is recommended that a rooting hormone be

used to encourage rapid rooting. Cuttings and seedlings can be transplanted in 6-8 weeks. Irrigation is recommended, although not critical, at drier sites to help the young plants get established. It is recommended that young plants be at least 6 inches in height before transplanting.

The use of plastic plant shelters is beneficial to protect young plants from heavy grazing, reduce plant competition, and create a more beneficial microclimate until young plants can get established.

### MANAGEMENT

Weed control is a problem in a dayflower plot as the leggy plants make it difficult to remove the weeds without removing the plants. A weed mat is recommended for situations, such as seed or plant production plantings, where weed control is a necessity. In other situations, such as deer food plots, weed control may not be an issue. Irrigation is recommended during drier periods for seed and plant production plantings.

The seed of erect dayflower is easy to process once harvested. However, the prostrate and indeterminate growth form of erect dayflower results in harvests of very small quantities of seed. This makes commercial production of large quantities of seed uneconomical, and limits its use for large-scale seedings and plantings.

### REFERENCES

**Ajilvsgi, G. (1984).** *Wildflowers of Texas.* Fredericksburg, TX: Shearer Publishing.

**Chamrad, A. D., and Box, T. W. (1968).** Food habits of white-tailed deer in south Texas. *Journal of Range Management.* v. 21, 158-164.

**Correll, D. S., and Johnston, M.C., (1996).** *Manual of the Vascular Plants of Texas.* Richardson, TX: The University of Texas at Dallas.

**Drawe, D.L. (1968).** Mid-summer diet of white-tailed deer on the Welder Wildlife Refuge. *Journal of Range Management.* v. 21, 164-166.

**Everitt, J. H., Drawe, D. L., and Lonard, R. I. (1999).** *Field Guide to the Broad-Leaved Herbaceous Plants of South Texas: Used by Livestock and Wildlife.* Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press.

**Jones, F. B., (1982).** *Flora of the Texas Coastal Bend.* Sinton, TX: Welder Wildlife Foundation.

### WHERE TO GET HELP

Contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly Soil Conservation Service) office for more information. Look in the phone book under "United States Government". The Natural Resources Conservation Service will be listed under the subheading "Department of Agriculture."

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