

AMERICAN WILD CARROT

Daucus pusillus Michx.

plant symbol = DAPU3

Contributed By: USDA, NRCS, Nacogdoches (TX)
Technical Office and the National Plant Data Center



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Alternate Names

Rattlesnakeweed, southwestern carrot, seedticks,
rattlesnake-weed, yerba del vibora

Uses

Ethnobotanic: Native Americans ate the roots raw and cooked (Epple 1995).

Medicinal: In California this species is called rattlesnake weed, because the herbage is reputed to be efficacious in the treatment of snake bites (Moldenke 1949). A poultice of the chewed plant has been applied to snakebites (Moerman 1998). A decoction has been used to treat colds, itches and fevers (Ibid.).

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Description

General: Celery Family (Apiaceae). *Daucus pusillus* is a native annual found most commonly during the early-mid part of the growing season. In most parts of Texas, this species has gone to seed by mid-summer. Rattlesnake-weed resemble their cultivated relative, the garden carrot. The stem is normally slender, from

2-4 feet in height and unbranched or only a single weak branch as compared to the introduced *Daucus carota*, which is sometimes heavily branched and more robust. The flower is a white umbel. Upon maturity, the flower cluster (umbel) closes to form a cup or bird's nest. The leaves are pinnately compound and finely cut. Leaflets are deeply serrated (saw-toothed). The seed of *Daucus carota* have fine hairs rather than the stiff bristles common to *Daucus pusillus*. Another distinguishing characteristic between the two species is the central flower of each individual umbellet is rose or purple in *Daucus carota* rather than being white throughout as found in *Daucus pusillus*.

American wild carrot is self-fertile. The flowers are hermaphrodite, having both male and female organs, and are pollinated by flies and bees.

A similar species is water parsnip (*Sium suave*), which has a corrugated main stem and leaves only once compound. Bishop's weed (*Ammi majus*) and water hemlock (*Cicuta maculata*) have white umbels, but the leaflets are not deeply serrated or carrot like.

Distribution

Daucus (pusillus or carota) is likely the most common and widespread plant with white umbels growing along Texas' roadsides. It is known from the U.S. West Coast and the southern half of the U.S. For current distribution, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Establishment

Adaptation: It is very common along road right-of-ways. It can also become quite dominant in some pastures and prairies. Rattlesnake-weed prefers moist, loamy sites, but not wet sites. The exotic, *Daucus carota*, tolerates a much broader site in Texas, ranging from blackland to rock outcrops.

American wild carrot requires moist, well-drained soil and prefers sandy, loamy and clay soils. It grows best in a sunny position and cannot tolerate shade. This species occurs in rocky prairies, openings in woodland, and rocky open, frequently limestone, glades, and edges of bluff escarpments, sometimes along roadsides and railroads (Steyermark 1963).

Propagation by Seed: American wild carrot seeds are best sown in the autumn. Always aim to sow thinly and evenly to permit adequate room for the seedlings to grow and develop freely (Heuser 1997). The seeds will germinate better if they are cold stratified.

Cultivars, Improved and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

These plant materials are readily available from commercial sources.

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