

## WILLOW PRIMROSE

*Ludwigia decurrens* Walt.

Plant Symbol = LUDE4

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



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### Alternate Names

Upright primrose, wingleaf primrose-willow,  
primrose-willow

### Uses

The common name primrose comes from the flower's resemblance to evening primroses (*Oenothera* species), since most have 4 petals. The more woody species of *Ludwigia* are very good browse for deer, goats, sheep and cattle. In fact, this species is rarely found in overgrazed pastures.

### 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:* Evening Primrose Family (Onagraceae). *Ludwigia decurrens*, a native, is the tallest water primrose, reaching a height of 3-6 feet. This perennial is somewhat "woody", which is unusual for species of water primroses. It is considered an annual to perennial. It also stands upright in contrast to most *Ludwigia* species, which trail along the ground or water. The leaves are usually linear (hence the name willow primrose), alternate, and entire. The flowers are yellow with 4-5 petals (usually 4). Also, common to the *Ludwigia* genus is the "seed box" located immediately below the flower. In fact, some refer to the entire genus as "seedboxes." Willow primrose has a very distinctive stem that is 4-winged and can be distinguished from all other water primroses by this unique characteristic.

There are approximately 11 species of *Ludwigia* in Texas. All species are found in wet sites and all but one species have yellow flowers. Six species have erect growth habits. Vegetatively, *Ludwigia alternifolia* is the most similar, but it does not have the distinctive winged stems and the seedbox is not nearly as long. *Ludwigia decurrens* has one of the longer "seedboxes" of all *Ludwigia*, attaining lengths of up to ¾ inch.

### Distribution

Found from Texas and Florida to Pennsylvania and Michigan. For current distribution, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

### Establishment

*Adaptation:* This species is found throughout the eastern half of Texas and well into north central Texas. It is found as individual plants scattered within the plant community, but can make up over 50% of the plant community. Unlike many of the floating water primroses, it is seldom found in sites that pond for long periods. Usually, it occurs on saturated soils and sites the pond for short duration (3-14 days). *Ludwigia decurrens* is commonly associated with species of *Polygonum* (smartweed)

and *Cyperus* (flat sedge). It is typically found on wetter sites than *Ludwigia alternifolia*, but dryer than the more herbaceous species of water primroses (*L. peploides*, *L. repens*, and *L. palustris*).

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

These plant materials are readily available from commercial sources. 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."

### **References**

Davis, L. 2000. *Texas plant fact sheet: Ludwigia decurrens*. USDA, NRCS, Nacogdoches Technical Office #2, Nacogdoches, Texas.

USDA, NRCS 2000. *The PLANTS database*. <<http://plants.usda.gov>>. 001206. National Plant Data Center, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

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