

***Centaurea americana* - American Basketflower**

By Sharon Parrish



American Basket Flower, sometimes called Shaving Brush or Straw-hat, is in the Sunflower family and the only genus native to North America. It is found in several states in southwest and north central US, as well as New York and South Carolina. The plant starts growing in late winter with blooming periods from May to July or August.

American Basketflower stands two to five feet high with two-three inch wide showy blooms that are generally lavender in color, with creamy centers, and have a honey fragrance. The height of the plant is largely dependent on soil conditions and rainfall. The plant can grow in sand, loam or clay and is found along roadsides, meadows, prairies and farmed or overgrazed fields. It grows best in full sun, and if enough land area is available, can be found in large colonies. This annual reseeds easily and has low water requirements. Stems are enlarged below the head and sport narrow simple leaves that attach directly to the stem. The leaves are smooth with no teeth and no hairs. The petals that make up the plant head are held by a basket weave phyllary, appearing as a bloom in a basket (hence the name).



Nectar from the blooms is high in sugar and amino acids, and pollen is high in protein. The plant attracts hummingbirds, song birds, butterflies, bees and other pollinators. Game and song birds especially nourish on the seeds that are relatively large with excellent nutritional value. American Basketflower is not grazed by wildlife or livestock and has no diseases or pests. The plant is generally tolerant of floods, droughts and freezing temperatures.

A Field Guide to Wildflowers, Trees and Shrubs of Texas, Delena Tull and George Oxford Miller, 1991
Range Plants of North Central Texas, Ricky J. Linex, 2014
Native American Seeds, www.seedsource.com, 2015

Seeds of Basketflower

