

**ARIZONA GAME AND FISH  
DEPARTMENT HERITAGE DATA  
MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

**Plant Abstract**

**Element Code:** PDCPP03080  
**Data Sensitivity:** No

**CLASSIFICATION, NOMENCLATURE, DESCRIPTION, RANGE**

**NAME:** *Peritoma multicaulis*  
**COMMON NAME:** Playa Spider Plant, Many Stemmed Spider-Flower, Slender Spiderflower  
**SYNONYMS:** *Cleome sonorae* A. Gray; *Peritoma sonorae* (A. Gray) Rydb, *Cleome multicaulis*  
**FAMILY:** Capparidaceae

**AUTHOR, PLACE OF PUBLICATION:** Sessé and Mociño ex. DC, Prodr. 1:240. 1824.

**TYPE LOCALITY:** West of the Chiricahua Mountains.

**TYPE SPECIMEN:** Wright. 1853.

**TAXONOMIC UNIQUENESS:** The genus *Peritoma* consists of six species in western North American.

**DESCRIPTION:** Slender erect annual herb, with unbranched or sparingly-branched stems, 20.0-70.0 cm (8.0-28.0 in.) tall, appearing delicate, without pubescence. Leaves are alternate, short-petiole to sessile, divided into three narrow leaflets, 1.0-3.0 cm (0.08-0.16 in.) long and 1.0-3.0 mm (0.04-0.12 in.) wide. Flowers openly scattered in axillary racemes (spike-like, borne in angle of leaf and stem) with pink-purple petals 4.0-7.0 mm (0.16-0.28 in.) long. Petals number four, and are clustered towards one side of the flower. Six stamens are equal in length to the petals. Fruits are narrow, multi-seeded capsules up to 2.0 cm long with a stalk-like base (gynophore) and droop at maturity. Capsules are obovoid (widest at the tip) to linear, 9.0-18.0 mm (0.36-0.72 in.) long, 2.0-4.0 mm (0.08-0.16 in.) thick.

**AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION:** Other species in the genus have longer petals (>6 mm), distinct petioles, more than three leaflets, or longer capsules (>2 cm). *Peritoma serrulata* is more robust, with broader leaflets, larger fruit, and entire (undivided) flower bracts, and has stamens that are much longer than the petals (WNDD, accessed 2001). *P. lutea* has yellow flowers (WNDD, accessed 2001).

**ILLUSTRATIONS:** Color photo (CSU, accessed 2001)  
Color photo (W. Fertig in WNDD, accessed 2001)  
B&W drawing (W. Fertig in USGS, NPWRC, accessed 2001)

**TOTAL RANGE:** South-central Colorado (San Luis Valley), southwestern New Mexico, southern Wyoming, and adjacent Arizona to central Mexico.

**RANGE WITHIN ARIZONA:** Known from two historical locations in Arizona: Wilcox Playa and San Bernardino Ranch, Cochise County. Recent efforts to relocate it at San Bernardino NWR have been unsuccessful (Warren 1999 draft). Arizona populations have not been confirmed since the 1940's (NatureServe, accessed 2001).

**SPECIES BIOLOGY AND POPULATION TRENDS**

**GROWTH FORM:** Herbaceous annual

**PHENOLOGY:** June-August

**BIOLOGY:**

**HABITAT:** Wet, saline or alkaline soils; often in and around alkali sinks, alkaline meadows, or old lake beds. Inhabits saline playas and springs (Warren 1999 draft).

**ELEVATION:** 3,600 - 4,200 ft. (1098 - 1281 m).

**EXPOSURE:**

**SUBSTRATE:** Alkaline soils.

**PLANT COMMUNITY:** Creosotebush desertscrub, desert-grassland. In Wyoming, populations are most abundant on damp (but not flooded) flats with approximately 90% cover of *Spartina gracilis*, *Distichlis stricta*, *Juncus balticus*, *Puccinellia nuttalliana*, *Scirpus nevadensis*, and *Triglochin maritimum* bordering playa lakes (WNDD, accessed 2001).

**POPULATION TRENDS:** Not well known. Population size may fluctuate annually, depending on moisture conditions and seed bank size (WNDD, accessed 2001). Draining of wetlands throughout the southwest is thought to have drastically decreased the amount of available habitats for this species (CSU, Accessed 2001).

## **SPECIES PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION**

**ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT STATUS:** None (USDI, FWS 1996)  
[Category 2 (USDI, FWS 1993)]  
[Category 2 (USDI, FWS 1990)]  
[Category 2 (USDI, FWS 1985)] [3C (USDI, FWS 1983)] [Category 2 (USDI, FWS 1980)] [PTN-T (USDI, FWS 1975)]

**STATE STATUS:** Salvage Restricted (ADA 1993)

**OTHER STATUS:**

**MANAGEMENT FACTORS:** Populations thrive in the saturated soils created by waterfowl management regimes. Draining of wetlands is thought to decrease the amount of available habitat. (CSU, Accessed 2001).

**PROTECTIVE MEASURES TAKEN:**

**SUGGESTED PROJECTS:** Survey Wilcox Playa.

**LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP:** FWS - San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuge; Private; and possibly State.

## **SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION**

**LITERATURE CITATIONS:**

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- Wyoming Natural Diversity Database (WNDD). accessed 2001. State Species Abstract: *Cleome multicaulis* (Many-Stemmed Spider-Flower), Capparaceae. [http://uwadmnweb.uwyo.edu/wyndd/pdf\\_files/plant\\_summaries/c/cleome%20multicaulis.pdf](http://uwadmnweb.uwyo.edu/wyndd/pdf_files/plant_summaries/c/cleome%20multicaulis.pdf).

**MAJOR KNOWLEDGEABLE INDIVIDUALS:**

Peter Warren - Tucson, Arizona.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

Reports by W.A. Weber that the species was introduced from Mexico into the southwestern U.S. several hundred years ago have never been confirmed (Dixon 1994 pers. comm.), and *C. multicaulis* is considered native throughout its historic and current range (NatureServe, accessed 2001).

**Revised:** (AZNHP)  
1994-10-10  
(PLW)  
2001-12-11  
(SMS)

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