

FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL

The Many-flowered Unicorn Plant

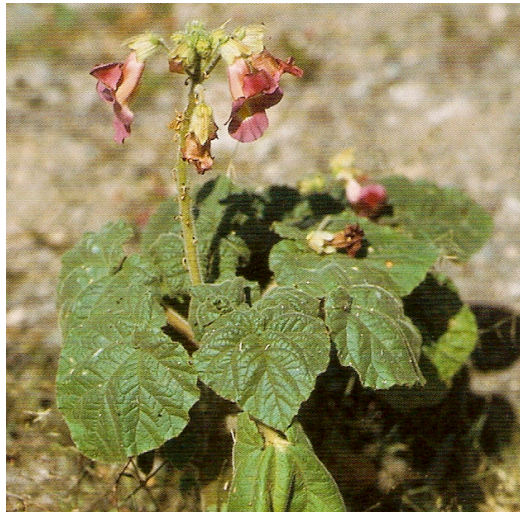


Photo: © Chester Rowell

A WILDFLOWER IN NEED

The Many-flowered Unicorn Plant (*Proboscidea spicata*) is found only in west Texas and northern Coahuila, Mexico. Only four collections of the plant have ever been made, and it has not been seen since 1967, despite subsequent searches.

PROTECTING THE RIO GRANDE ECOSYSTEM

The unicorn plant inhabits dry, sandy and alluvial soils along terraces on the Rio Grande. Protection for the unicorn plant would help safeguard the rich biodiversity of the Rio Grande ecosystem, which includes hundreds of wildlife species.

KNOW YOUR UNICORN PLANT

- Devilish Seedpods: the fruit of unicorn plants eventually dries into a woody “devil’s claw” that is picked up by animal passers-by to spread the unicorn plant’s seed. If picked young, the seedpods can be pickled and eaten.
- Spiky Flowers: this unicorn plant flowers in May and June, and possibly until August. Its blooms are pink or purplish. Its Latin name derives from its “spicate” or spikelike arrangement of 25 or more small flowers on a 5-inch long stalk.
- Reclining on the River: this species is an annual plant that reaches a maximum of 12 inches but grows in a reclining fashion.
- Namesakes: The Latin genus name for the unicorn plant – *Proboscidea* – is also the Latin order name for elephants.

CLIMATE CHAOS

The unicorn plant’s Rio Grande ecosystem is threatened by increasingly long droughts caused by climate change.

