

Oenothera laciniata
Cutleaf Evening Primrose

Family: Onagraceae



S.H. Brown

Leaves are lanceolate, deeply notched, medium green, hairs on upper surface and none below.

Cutleaf Evening Primrose

Synonyms: *Raimannia laciniata*, *Oenothera laciniata* var. *mexicana*, *O. mexicana*, *Raimannia mexicana*

Distribution: Northeastern to southeastern USA, Florida to New Mexico, to Northern Mexico

U.S.D.A Zones: 2b—11b; -55°F

Growth Rate: Fast

Flowering months: All year in south Florida. Late spring through early fall in northern regions

Salt Tolerance: Medium

Drought Tolerance: High

Soils: Prefers well-drained, moist to dry, sandy or limestone

Nutritional Requirements: Low

Potential Major Pests: Aphids; powdery mildew

Typical Florida Dimensions: Up to 34 inches tall and 3 to 6 feet wide

Propagation: Seeds; cuttings

Human Hazards: None

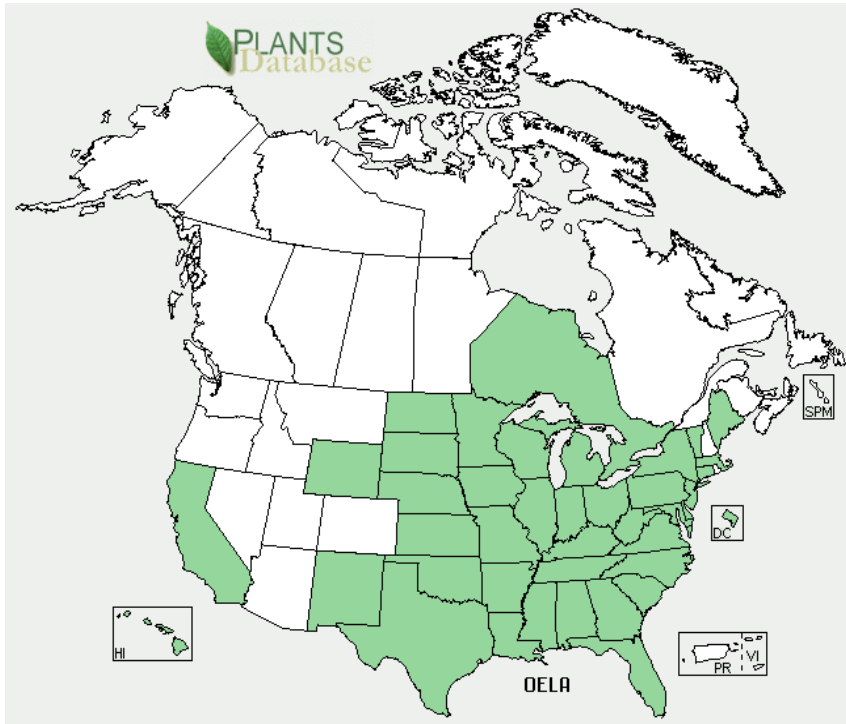
Uses: Groundcover, bedding plant but often considered a weed



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Geographic Distribution

Cutleaf evening primrose, *Oenothera laciniata*, is found in much of North America east of the Rocky Mountains and California. It is not found in the Pacific northwest. It is also established in Quebec, Ontario, Central and South America and Europe. It prefers well-drained sandy and limestone soils. Cutleaf evening primrose grows well on disturbed ground, fields, roadsides, and along railroads and fencerows.



Distribution of cutleaf evening primrose in Canada and the United States.

USA distribution: AL, AR, CA, CT, DE, FL, GA, HI, IL, IN, IA, KS, KY, LA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MN, MS, NO, NE, NJ, NM, NY, NC, SD, TN, TX, VT, VA, WV, WI, WY, DC

Growth Habit

The species is a low-growing or erect annual or perennial herb. When erect it is usually not more than 34 inches tall. The plant begins with a rosette of leaves that sends out hairy stems three to six feet long. Flowers are produced on these stems. Both flowers and seed pods are present at the same time. The plant forms a fibrous root system.



Late February

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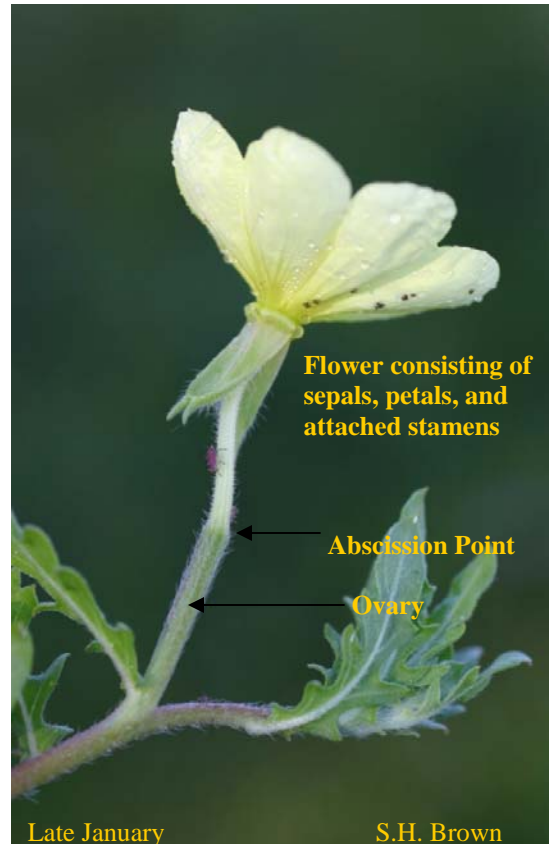
The plant starts as a rosette of leaves



Leaves: The leaf are simple, elliptic to lance-shaped. The leaf blade is relatively narrow, with deep irregular notches or lobes. It is hairy on the upper surface and has no hairs on the underside. The leaves are alternately arranged on the stems. The stem is usually reddish in color.



Flowers and Fruits: In south Florida, cutleaf evening primrose flowers more abundantly winter through spring. The flowers have four petals, 1/2 to 1.25 inches in diameter. They may be yellow or red in color and are attached to long, green, tube-like structures known as the ovary. The flowers open in low light and usually fall within 24 hours of exposure to strong sunlight. The remaining ovary will develop into a fruit known as a capsule. When mature the capsule splits open to expel many small seeds.



The tubular flowers are borne on the leaf axils



Mid-March

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Fruits: A capsule approximately 3/4 to 1.5 inches long, and often curved. It contains many seeds arranged in rows.



Late February

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Cutleaf evening primrose as a garland. This picture depicts the spreading characteristic of the prostrate form of this vigorous plant.

Uses

Cutleaf evening primrose is a noxious weed in agriculture, but horticulturists have found it useful as a vigorous groundcover and bedding plant. Naturalists consider it a desirable native wildflower. Bobwhite quails, mourning doves and American gold finches relish its seeds. Many species of butterflies and moths nectar on the flowers. Cherokee Indians consumed its leaves as potherb, and used a compound derived from its leaves in a body wash. They and other Native American tribes used the seed for various medicinal purposes. Cutleaf evening primrose freely reseeds. It is often considered a weedy species as its tiny black seeds remain viable in the soil for many years. Propagation is by seeds or cuttings.

Cutleaf evening primrose flower and seed production time line. From Day 1, depicting flower bud, through Day 42 with shriveled seed capsule



Day 1-flower bud at noon



Day 2-fully expanded flower at 8 am



Day 2-shriveled blossom at 5 pm



Day 3- abscised flower falls on the ovary



Day 13



Day 27-The capsule begins to expel seeds



Day 37



Day 42-all seeds expelled

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