

***Bergia texana*** (Hook.) Seub. Ex Walp.

Texas bergia

Elatinaceae (Waterwort Family)

**Status:** State Review Group -1

**Rank:** G5SNR

**General Description:** Adapted from Hitchcock et al. (1961), and Hickman (1993): *Bergia texana* is an annual or short-lived perennial with simple to freely branched, trailing to ascending stems 2 to 12 in. (0.5-3 dm) long and a somewhat woody base when perennial. The plant is covered in very short hairs except on the petals. The leaves are 4-ranked,  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (2-4 cm) long, and have a wedge-shaped base and a pointed tip. The leaves have a fine-toothed margin and a slender petiole. The flowers occur along the stem in leaf axils as well as at the tip, and are either solitary or in clusters. The flowers are white to greenish and have 5 oblong petals that are shorter than the toothed leafy bracts beneath them, which are about  $\frac{1}{8}$  in. (3 mm) long. Many of the flowers do not open and self-pollinate. The fruit is ovoid with 5 chambers, each many-seeded. The oblong seeds are not visible through the fruit wall, and are somewhat curved, brown, and net-like.

**Identification Tips:** This is the only species of *Bergia* in the US. Other members of the Waterwort Family that are found in Washington include *Elatine brachysperma*, *E. californica*, and *E. rubella*. *Bergia texana* may be distinguished from the *Elatine* species by its woody base, the number of petals in the flower, and the visibility of the seeds through the fruit wall. *B. texana* sometimes has a woody base while the *Elatine* species do not, even though they may also be annual or perennial. All of the *Elatine* species have less than 5 petals, while *B. texana* has 5 petals. The seeds of *B. texana* are not visible through the fruit wall, but the seeds of all *Elatine* species are visible through the fruit wall. *Lythrum portula* also looks very similar to and is often mistaken for *B. texana*, but can be distinguished by rooting nodes and sometimes by its flower color. *L. portula* roots at its nodes, while *B. texana* does not. *B. texana* has white to greenish flowers, while *L. portula* has pink to white flowers. A technical key is recommended for identifying this species.

**Phenology:** This species blooms June through November; bloom dates in Washington are unknown.

**Range:** This species is known from Washington south through California, east to Illinois and south to Texas, Louisiana, and northeast

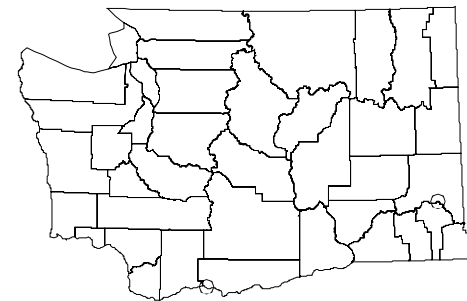
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Illustration by F. Emil.  
from Britton, N.L., and A.  
Brown. 1913. An Illustrated  
Flora of the Northern United  
States and Canada. Vol. 2



Known distribution  
of *Bergia texana*  
in Washington



● Current (1980+)  
○ Historic (older than 1980)

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Robert H. Mohlenbrock @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / USDA NRCS. 1992. Western wetland flora: Field office guide to plant species. West Region, Sacramento, CA

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Mexico. In Washington, this species is only known from Whitman and Klickitat counties, along the Snake and Columbia rivers.

**Habitat:** This species prefers moist, disturbed soils, margins of vernal pools, and sand bars along rivers at elevations below 600 feet (200 m).

**Ecology:** *Bergia texana* is an obligate wetland species.

**State Status Comments:** This species is only known from less than five occurrences in Washington. Because *Bergia texana* was recently added to the Washington rare plant list and is difficult to identify, not much is known about the degree of its rarity in the state at this time.

**Inventory Needs:** Adjacent sites along the Snake and Columbia rivers need to be investigated.

**Threats and Management Concerns:** Much of the potential habitat along the Columbia and Snake rivers has been lost to hydropower development. Competitions with invasive species such as *Lythrum portula* also pose a possible threat.

### **References:**

Hickman, J.C. 1993. *The Jepson Manual: Higher Plants of California*. University of California Press, Berkeley. 1400 pp.

Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, J.W. Thompson. 1961. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest Part 3: Saxifragaceae to Ericaceae*. University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA. 614 pp.