

Title:

Hill Country Flora Virtual Herbarium
Search Engine

OR

Virtual Herbarium
Search Engine

Description:

There are many virtual herbariums but ours has a user-friendly interface that facilitates identifying wildflowers.

What many people see may actually not be taxonomically correct. This search engine can identify a plant that you think has two petals but in fact actually has three petals. We usually narrow the search down to between 1 to 4 plants out of 400 by just providing bloom color, the bloom month, the number of petals, leaf shape and arrangement. If more characteristics are needed then the leaf apex, margin, base and structure can also be specified. If you do not know the taxonomic terms in the drop-down menus there are view buttons that display a picture and description of each term from which you can select.

You don't need to know the meaning of the taxonomic terms but as you use it you will learn the meaning of the taxonomic terms.

Raúl V. Peña
830-377-7577
Raul@penasco.net

Bio:

After retiring from Shell Development, my wife and I bought some property here in the Texas Hill Country 18 years ago. Within the first two years we identified over 200 different wildflowers on our land. At that time virtual herbariums were almost useless for identifying plants because they were nothing more than a collection of pictures grouped by family. The other resource was flipping through the pages of wildflowers books until you found a picture that matched your plant. That was what motivated me to develop a search engine that anybody could easily use to identify wildflowers. This was about the time that Barbara Lowenthal was compiling taxonomic descriptions of plants for the Riverside Nature Center in Kerrville, Texas. With these descriptions and pictures donated by over 47 members of the Native Plant Society and the Texas Master Naturalist Program, I was able to develop a relational database with a user-friendly interface that allows anyone to select characteristics they see in a plant to identify it. Although my degree is in Biology I spent most of my career with Shell Development in software support and a software development group. My wife and I are long term members of Kerrville Native Plant Society. My wife helped start the Kerrville Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist Program and was the first president of that Chapter.