

Bastard toadflax

Common Name

Bastard toadflax

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Scientific Name

Comandra umbellata

Scientific Pronunciation

koh-MAN-druh um-bell-AY-tuh

Plant Family

[Santalaceae](#)

Plant Origin

[Native](#)

Duration

[Perennial](#)

Color

[White](#)

Plant Type

[Wildflower](#)

Typical Bloom (varies by elevation)

[May](#)

Bastard toadflax grows in clumps up to a foot tall, and has smooth alternating leaves from a quarter to an inch and a half long. The tiny flower starts as a tight little ball which opens up into a star formed by the five sepals. There are no petals. Blossoms remain open night and day for two days. The minute fruit are drupes, meaning a fleshy fruit with a stone such as a cherry.

The name, bastard toadflax, means false toadflax. Neither the flower nor the leaves resemble the other toadflax species that have a snapdragon-type flower. The scientific name is clearer, referring to the hairiness of the stamens and the flat-topped flower clusters that resemble umbrellas.

Bastard toadflax is a parasite that depends upon other plants for survival, and it is a member of a plant family that is able to use over two hundred different species as its host. This is the most diverse of any parasitic plant. Within two weeks of seed germination, subterranean roots attach themselves to nearby vegetation to draw nutrients and water. Although it is always parasitic, it can also make its own food through photosynthesis.

Native Americans used a decoction of bastard toadflax as a wash for sores or inflamed eyes.

