

***Cryptantha mexicana*** (Brandege) Johnston, comb. nov.

*Krynitzkia mexicana* T. S. Brandege, Zoe 5: 182. Aug. 1905.

Type from Viesca, Coahuila, 1903, *Purpus* 126.

This species has been confused with *Cryptantha albida* (H.B.K.) Johnston, but is readily distinguished from it by differences in habit of growth and its more bristly green herbage, larger proportionately broader fruiting calyces, and more elongate, conspicuously bracted cymes. It is a spring-flowering herb with several to many, dichotomously branching stems which are usually decumbent or widely ascending. *Cryptantha albida*, on the other hand, is a much taller, and more slender, summer-flowering herb. Its one to several stems form straight erect axes from which numerous lateral branches arise. Typical *C. albida* grows in western trans-Pecos Texas and southern Arizona and extends south through western Coahuila and eastern Chihuahua and Durango to central Mexico. The type came from Hidalgo. *Cryptantha mexicana*, however, is the common annual member of this genus in the large area from the vicinity of El Paso, Texas, and southeastern New Mexico, southeastward to the southern tip of Texas, and south across the Rio Grande to northern Nuevo Leon and southern Coahuila. It appears to affect warmer areas and generally lower altitudes than *C. albida*; unlike *C. albida*, which seems to be most common in volcanic areas, it seems to have a prevailing special preference for limestone soils.

The nomenclatorial history of the species is confused. The original description of *Krynitzkia mexicana* Brandege, as between *Cryptantha albida* and the present species applies well to the latter. In addition to the type (Viesca, Coahuila, 1903, *Purpus* 126), another collection, *Pringle* 8301 from "Diaz" (i.e. Piedras Negras), Coahuila, is also mentioned by the author of the species. Pringle's collection is very characteristic of *C. mexicana* as here accepted. However, the type collection now preserved at the University of California at Berkeley, is a mixture of recognizable *C. mexicana* and young plants of *Amblynotopsis heliotropioides* (A. DC.) Macbride. Since Mr. Brandege's original description of *K. mexicana* does not apply to the *Amblynotopsis*, only the *Cryptantha* included under *Purpus* 126 is considered as belonging to his species.

I have recognized the present species as distinct from *C. albida* for many years and over this period have reported many specimens of it to collectors under the name "*Cryptantha mexicana* (Brandg) Jtn." By oversight this combination was not properly published. In the meantime, however, two improper uses of the name have appeared in print. In Brand's treatment of *Cryptantha*, in the *Pflanzenreich*, Heft. 97, p. 63. 1931, the name *Cryptantha mexicana* Brandg. appears in the synonymy of *Cryptantha albida*. Brand makes no mention of the binomial, *Krynitzkia mexicana*! It seems clear that the name, *Cryptantha mexicana* was made unintentionally and is to be dismissed as a slip of the pen. In any case, appearing in synonymy, it is not validly published (Intern. Code, Art. 37) and is to be ignored. A more



recent use of the binomial occurs in W. B. McDougall & O. E. Sperry's "Plants of the Big Bend National Park", p. 143. 1951. In this popular, non-technical flora the binomial "*Cryptantha mexicana*" appears bare, without any accompanying citation of author, bibliographic reference or name-bringing synonym. The two lines of English description are so general as to be applicable to at least half the species in the genus. Since I used the name, *Cryptantha mexicana*, in identifying for Dr. Sperry some of his plants from the Big Bend, it does seem probable that McDougall & Sperry used the name as I had applied it. This, however, is only surmise. Since there is no indication that the publication of a new combination was intended by McDougall & Sperry, I am dismissing their use of "*Cryptantha mexicana*" as unintentional and mere incidental mention.

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