

Mexican pricklypoppy

(*Argemone mexicana*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms.

Also known as Yellow pricklypoppy, Mexican pricklypoppy is an eye-catching wildflower with an imposing presence. Its brilliant blooms are quite attractive, but don't get too close — the rest of the plant is armed with sharp spines. It blooms winter through summer, typically peaking in early spring and drawing a variety of pollinators. The plant is often spotted in open, disturbed sites and along roadsides throughout much of Florida.



Photo by Betsy Harris

Mexican pricklypoppy's showy yellow to yellowish-orange flowers are 1–3 inches wide and cup-shaped with six petals that often appear crumpled. Stamens are numerous with yellow filaments and yellow to reddish-orange anthers. Pistils are topped with a dark reddish-orange stigma. Flowers are subtended with bracts. Calyces are composed of three spine-tipped sepals. Stems are branched and arise from a basal rosette of long, deeply lobed leaves with prickly margins. The young rosette may be misidentified as a thistle (*Cirsium* spp.). Leaves are sessile, clasping and alternately arranged. Leaf surface is glaucous, giving the plant a whitish or silvery hue. Fruit is a spine-covered capsule.

The plant is poisonous if ingested but has been used medicinally by many cultures. Seed capsules and stems emit a toxic yellowish latex when split open. The seeds contain a pale-yellow oil (also known as katkar oil) that is also toxic. The oil may be used for lighting and as an insecticide.

Family: Papaveraceae (Poppy family)

Native range: Nearly throughout peninsula, few Panhandle counties

To see where natural populations of Mexican pricklypoppy have been vouchered, visit www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.

Lifespan: Annual

Soil: Dry, well-drained sandy soils

Exposure: Full sun

Growth habit: 1–3' tall, ±1' wide

Mexican pricklypoppy is not commercially available. Visit a natural area to see it.

SCAN FOR FULL
PLANT PROFILE:



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Florida Wildflower Foundation • P O Box 941691, Maitland, FL 32794-1691 • 407-622-1606 • www.FlaWildflowers.org

