

Galinsoga parviflora

Named after Spanish botanist Ignacio Mariano Martinez de Galinsoga.

Parviflora is Latin for "little flower".

Common names:

- Gallant soldiers
- Quickweed
- Potato weed
- Estrellitas, Piquant blanc
- Guascas (Columbia)
- Piojito (Mexico)
- "My Husband is sleeping" (Malawi)



Distribution:

Originally native to South and Central America, this plant has become an invasive and naturalised weed in North America, Africa, Europe to Scandinavia, the Middle East, Asia and Australasia.

Description and Identification:

G.parviflora is an erect, hairless, annual herb that grows to a height of about 10-75cm (30"), at this height it can ramble a bit.

Leaves are opposite and oval to pointed, stalked, with a +/-toothed margin(?).

Flowers are small (3-5mm across), composite(Asteraceae), with tiny yellow central disc florets, and (usually) five 3-lobed white ray florets (1mmx1mm). On forked stems coming from leaf axils. One flower per fork.

Nutrition and Culinary Uses:

A nutritional analysis of G.parviflora has shown it to contain 3.2g protein per 100g, 1.1g fibre, Vitamin A, Vitamin C(Ascorbic Acid), beta carotene, riboflavin, niacin, potassium, magnesium, zinc and high levels of calcium(284mg/100g compared with Parsley 140mg/100g). It also contains other beneficial nutrients (flavonoids, terpenes etc)

The whole plant, leaves stems and flowers, can be used, as a salad vegetable, or as a pot herb. It is a specified herb in many South and Central American recipes, such as the Colombian Chicken & Potato stew (Aijaco) as "guascas" and in Mexico in Sopa de Guias, a soup of squash and corn.

Although fairly flavourless as a raw salad, a subtle artichoke-like flavour develops with cooking. The whole plant can be dried and powdered for ease of adding to soups and stews etc.

Medicinal Uses:

G.parviflora has been the subject of numerous medicinal and pharmacological studies, and has been shown to:

- Be useful in managing inflammatory conditions
- Be useful in treating cold and flu symptoms, and even malarial symptoms
- Be useful in managing blood sugar in diabetic disorders
- Be anti bacterial particularly in managing growth of bacterial cultures such as S.aureus
- Be useful in wound healing, and management of skin ailments such as rashes and eczema, possibly even been analgesic

Lookalikes and how to distinguish them:

Tridax Daisy (Tridax procumbens): pointier, more toothed leaves, bigger flowers, tougher, prostrate
Ageratum sp. (When young): Cordate leaves, less pronounced ribs, smell