



One in a series..... this one is not in my sacred gardens

Croton texensis

Skunk weed or dove weed is the subject today. Over the weekend (August 21, 2021) my brother Jay and I were talking about a range of subjects as we drove down from Big Lake in the White Mountains. One story that came up was hunting doves on the Navajo reservation back in the day. One location I remembered was near Indian Wells and in a valley that on a good season in August/September is usually awash in this “weed”. As I sat thinking about our conversation I realized that I’m supposed to be this knowledgeable plant guy... but what in the hell is the exact species and more over, what is even the genus of this dove weed? So I decided to take a quick trip Sunday out onto the reservation to see if any remnants of this plant were visible and then research it. So far a decent monsoon season but, as any good Arizonian knows it can be super dry in any area if the rain gods so decree!

Approaching outside the target area it appeared that moisture had been more than adequate because the hills were noticeably verdant green and the roadsides were littered with various blooming plants. Down into the valley though it seemed a bit drier and noticeably browner... naturally. Turning down a dirt road I did eventually come across my intended prey... barely a handful skirted the road particularly on the south side as pictured to the right. Although not any waving fields of them as I’d seen years before but, a few and that was more than enough for my purposes.





Dove weed is dioecious... having male reproductive organs in one individual and female in another.

With pistillate flowers, this is the female.

The male plant has a noticeably more leaner and open structure. Looking at its many flowers you can easily tell that they are all staminate.



After quickly scanning the plants next to the road, it was more than obvious that they were dioecious and after reading about them in my book, **Seed Plants of Northern Arizona**, I could deduce they were a Croton and more specifically Croton texensis... an annual. When in seed and in quantity, they are a major source of food for morning doves, pack rats, etcetras.



Roadsides were repleat with colorful bushes and many areas had enormous waving fields of grass. Great news for the sheep, goats and cows. Horses? Didn't see any, but yea sure, them also.

Despite the prevailing myth that the local Indians somehow love **mother earth**, evidence to the contrary was evident up and down this out of the way dirt road. Really sad!!

Until later....

