**Scoparia** L.  
*(Capraria, Gratiola)*

**Hybrid Scoparias**

**Other Common Names:** Blue Scoparia, Yellow Scoparia, Hybrid Sweet Broom.

**Family:** Plantaginaceae; also placed by various authorities in the Gratiolaceae, Scrophulariaceae, or Veronicaceae.

**Cold Hardiness:** Although initial reports indicated these taxa were cold hardy only in USDA zones 10 to 13, some have overwintered in several years in USDA zone 8; Hybrid Scoparias are used as annuals in colder climates.

**Foliage:** The semi-evergreen to evergreen foliage, has remained evergreen in Dallas at 16°F; the alternate, opposite to whorled, linear, oblanceolate to narrowly obovate simple leaves have entire, irregularly serrate to distally lobed margins; the foliage is sometimes described as being melon scented, but is not edible.

**Flower:** Tiny blue, yellow or white flowers are present whenever temperatures permit, seasonal to year-round depending upon the environment; most presently in the trade are blue flowering; deadheading is not required to maintain bloom; four stamens are fused to the base of the corolla formed from four broadly ovate petals; the superior ovaries have two carpels; flowers are very mildly fragrant.

**Fruit:** The tiny dehiscent capsules have numerous minute seeds.

**Stem / Bark:** Stems — cylindrical to shallowly winged; Buds — tiny, foliose or with poorly formed bud scales; Bark — gray-tan bark eventually forms on older plants, but may not be applicable where it functions as an annual.

**Habit:** These small fine textured semi-evergreen shrubs or subshrubs are grown mostly as a short-lived perennial in southern portions of our region or as a summer annuals in colder zones; as a subshrub or annual plants they typically grow as irregularly rounded mounds 12” to 18” tall with a similar width, most cultivars can grow somewhat larger were they do not die back from winter cold; although moderately heat and drought tolerant, growth may stall in the mid-summer heat.

**Cultural Requirements:** Most Hybrid Scoparia are moderately drought tolerant once established requiring occasional irrigation during dry periods; flowering is best in full sun to partial shade, with canopies becoming more open with increasing shade; plants can be pruned back to remove winter damaged foliage or to encourage denser foliage; moderate irrigation and fertilization encourages more vigorous growth.

**Pathological Problems:** Root or crown rots can be a problem on poorly drained soils, otherwise few disease or pest problems have been reported.

**Ornamental Assets:** A low growth habit, soft textured foliage, and beautiful blue flowers over a long blooming season are this species’ primary assets.

**Limitations & Liabilities:** Cold temperatures present the most significant limitation to growth; plants usually function as annuals or short-lived dieback perennial subshrubs in our region.

**Landscape Utilization:** Although not likely fully explored due to its recent introduction to the market, Blue Scoparia works equally well in containers or landscape plantings where it can be used alone en masse or perhaps more effectively as filler material to accentuate bolder coarser textured foliaged or flowering species.

**Other Comments:** This new comer to the trade shows excellent potential and will provide nearly year-round flowering where winter and summer extremes permit, elsewhere it offers good potential as a seasonal annual with a very unique flower color; the genus name means broom-like.

**Native Habitat:** Probably native to the New World tropics, but naturalized throughout many tropical and subtropical regions of the world, including the Southern USA.

**Related Taxa:** The common form in the American nursery trade is ‘USSCO10’, US Plant Patent 15,934, marketed under the trade name of Melongolly™ Blue Scoparia by Proven Winners®; this cultivar has powder blue flowers and a nice mounding habit 12” to 18” tall; Melongolly Yellow Scoparia, ‘USSCO01-3’, US Plant Patent 19,933 offers yellow flowers, but has not been widely tested in our region; other cultivars exist, but most appear to be of hybrid origin; many appear to have Scoparia dulcis L., Escobilla, Sweet Broom or Licorice Weed, as one of the parental species which is thought to be native to the New World tropics, but naturalized throughout many tropical and subtropical regions of the world, including the Southern USA.

**References:** Little is available on this genus in textbooks and popular press books regarding their use as ornamentals as they are so new to the nursery trade, however additional information can be obtained on various websites.