**Bouchea linifolia** A. Gray

**Flaxleaf Bouchea**

**Other Common Names:** Groovestem Bouchea.

**Family:** Verbenaceae.

**Cold Hardiness:** USDA zones 7 through 9 (10?).

**Foliage:** Deciduous; opposite; simple; linear to narrowly lanceolate; flax-like as is implied by the specific epithet; (¼O) ½O to 1¾O (rarely 2O) long; medium to dark green; nearly glabrous; not thick in texture as with B. spathulata; tips acute to shallowly mucronate; margins entire, but may become revolute during droughty conditions; blades sessile; foliage rather sparse or loosely borne; no fall color.

**Flower:** Borne in 2O to 5O long loose terminal spikes or raceme; individual flowers perfect; ¾O to 1O long; ½O to ¾O in diameter; sessile or with a short peduncle; a green tubular five-lobed calyx encasing the lower quarter to half of the tubular corolla; corolla lavender, purple, to purple-blue; the salverform corolla flaring into five separate lobes; blooming late spring to autumn; very attractive.

**Fruit:** Linear, beaked, two-part ¼O to ½O long achene-like schizocarp; dry; not attractive; deadheading is not needed to maintain flowering, but may improve aesthetics.

**Stem / Bark:** Stems — very slender; green, later light tan to brown; nearly glabrous; ridged/grooved; stiff; Buds — foliose; light green; 1/16 O to 1/32 O long; Bark — light tan to gray-brown and becoming scaly; developing only at the base of the plant.

**Habit:** When not pruned, Flaxleaf Bouchea forms an erect open twiggy subshrub 2O to 3N tall and with a similar spread; with proper pruning plants usually function more in the 1N to 2N range in our gardens; the canopy is light, open and airy imparting an overall fine texture to the plant.

**Cultural Requirements:** Best in full sun, but tolerates partial shade; plants require a well drained soil, but are pH adaptable and originate from predominantly limestone soils; highly drought and heat tolerant; plants can tolerate some salts in the root zone; if left untended, the canopy becomes rather unkept with lots of old dead twigs; best treated as a herbaceous perennial and pruned back to within 6O or so of the crown in late winter, prior to resumption of spring growth; plants can be pruned during the growing season if necessary, but flowering may be temporarily lost; cuttings root easily, but tend to stall when transplanted from community flats; when propagating this species it is best to use individual rooting containers to minimize root disturbance when up-canning; readily transplanted from containers to the landscape; after initial establishment, plants seldom need irrigation; avoid using heavy organic mulches beneath Flaxleaf Bouchea; this species is more likely to succumb to gardening kindness than adverse conditions.

**Pathological Problems:** Root rots on poorly drained soils; best growth in hot dry climates, but the species can adapt to eastern portions of our range if excellent soil drainage is provided.

**Ornamental Assets:** Season-long sprays of lavender to purple-blue flowers during the hottest part of summers; a hummingbird attractant.

**Limitations & Liabilities:** One either finds the light canopy lends an ethereal appeal or alternatively that it is too open and weedy; plants are hauntingly stark in winter; although the foliage is an eye of the beholder sort of thing, the flowers are of nearly universal appeal.

**Landscape Utilization:** Mixed or perennial borders; xeriscapes; southwestern landscapes; rock gardens; patio containers; low maintenance color plantings; an outstanding plant for Central, South, and West Texas gardens.
**Other Comments:** This was one of the last plants that the late Benny Simpson was investigating prior to his passing; my appreciation of this species has increased over time; the fine texture and soft, but nearly continual unusual colored summer flowers have won me over; this species could benefit from production studies to produce a denser plant that is in flower for the retail nursery or garden center; the genus name means closed, referring to the covering of the mature seeds by the calyx.

**Native Habitat:** Trans Pecos, West Texas, New Mexico, and North Mexico.

**Related Taxa:** A selection by the late Benny Simpson with improved flowering is currently being evaluated in the CEMAP trials.

*Bouchea spathulata* J. Torrey  
*Spoon-Leaf Bouchea*  
C Also known as Texas Bouchea; this closely related *Bouchea* from the Dead Horse Mountain region has rose-pink to rosy purple flowers from late spring through early fall, spatulate-shaped leaves, and is a more densely branched and more generously foliaged plant; although seldom cultivated, *B. spathulata* offers possibilities as a 2 to 3 tall subshrub for dry limestone soils in western portions of our region.


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