Amsonia tabernaemontana  
(T. Walter)  
Texas Blue Star  
(Amsonia montana)

**Other Common Names:** Amsonia, Blue Dogbane, Eastern Bluestar, Texas Amsonia, Texas Star, Willow Amsonia, Woodland Bluestar.

**Family:** Apocynaceae.

**Cold Hardiness:** Texas Blue Star can be grown in USDA zones 4 to 9, depending upon the genotype used.

**Foliage:** Alternate, simple, 2” to 6” long, lanceolate to narrowly ovate, simple leaves radiate alternately around the stiffly erect stems; venation is pinnate with a lighter midrib and dull to dark green blade; the glabrous blades have acute to acuminate tips, broadly acute to obtuse bases, ciliate to nearly glabrous margins and short stout petioles.

**Flower:** Small, ¾” diameter, salverform flowers with five narrow linear petals flaring open in a star-shaped pattern from the narrow fused corolla tube are borne terminally in small dense clusters; the pale blue flowers open in late spring and are effective for a few weeks.

**Fruit:** Small follicles are not ornamental; numerous seeds are present.

**Stem / Bark:** Stems — numerous stiff, erect, largely unbranched stems, originate primarily from a perennial base; Buds — green buds are tiny and foliose; Bark — not applicable, does not form bark.

**Habit:** Texas Blue Stars are medium textured rounded to spreading mounds of erect to arching stems forming a generally rounded mound 18” to 24” (36”) tall.

**Cultural Requirements:** Plants tolerate full sun to partial shade, but generally require a steady supply of moisture, neutral to acidic soil pH, and organic to sandy soils to thrive; they have been reported to survive on drier sites with higher pH soils, but tend to not perform as strongly.

**Pathological Problems:** Few pathogens or pests are serious.

**Ornamental Assets:** The primary asset is the presence of uniquely colored pale blue star-like flowers; yellow fall foliage is a secondary interest.

**Limitations & Liabilities:** Plants tend to have problems on drier or higher pH soils.

**Landscape Utilization:** *Amsonia tabernaemontana* works well in mixed perennial borders, particularly those featuring pastel colors; plants can be effective in rain gardens as well as in transition plantings between cultivated and natural landscapes.

**Other Comments:** Careful placement of Texas Blue Star is needed in designs or it tends to become overwhelmed by bolder colors and textures; its effects can be more subtle than some of our other native perennials; the specific epithet is derived from the Latinized version of the 16th century herbalist Jakob Theodor von Bergzabern.

**Native Habitat:** *Amsonia tabernaemontana* is native to the eastern USA, including East Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana.

**Related Taxa:** *Amsonia tabernaemontana* T. Walter var. *salicifolia* (F.T. Pursh) R.E. Woodson (Amsonia salicifolia), Willow Amsonia or Willowleaf Blue Star, is a narrower leaved form with a somewhat finer textured appearance; the genus *Amsonia* T. Walter has several closely related species to *A. tabernaemontana*, including *Amsonia gluterrima* R.E. Woodson, *Amsonia illustris* R.E. Woodson, and *Amsonia repens* L.H. Shinners, which may represent a single larger species with several ecological variants; *Amsonia ciliata* T. Walter which provides ornamental attributes is reported to grow on sand hills and might be a better choice for drier sites.

**References:** Correll and Johnston, 1979; Gill and White, 2002; Odenwald and Turner, 1996; Welch, 1989.

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