**Chrysactinia mexicana** A. Gray

**Damianita**

**Other Common Names:** Calanca, False Damiana, Damianita Daisy, Garanona, Mariola, Romerillo, San Nicholas, Yeyepaxtle.

**Family:** Asteraceae (Compositae).

**Cold Hardiness:** Plants are useful in USDA zones 7 to 10.

**Foliage:** Evergreen; alternate; simple; linear to linear-lanceolate; ¼" to ½" long; leaves are often dense on the distal stems; tips cuspidate-mucronate; blades essentially sessile; margins entire; the aromatic leaves are glandular beneath; older leaves tend to be retained for a time after turning brown.

**Flower:** Numerous small ⅛" to ⅜" diameter yellow terminal composite heads; usually eight ray flowers surround the dozen or so tiny golden disk flowers in small hemispherical clusters; ray flowers usually have three teeth on the distal end; heads are borne individually on slender peduncles 1½" to 2½" above the foliage; flowering occurs from late spring to early fall, depending upon the cultural conditions, elevation and latitude under which the plant is grown.

**Fruit:** Tiny linear dull white achenes with scabrous bristles.

**Stem / Bark:** Stems — erect; thin; stiff; resinous; aromatic when crushed; eventually with some exfoliation; green turning dark brown to gray-black; branched more extensively on distal portions; Buds — very very tiny, green and nearly encased in the stem, later brown; Bark — gray to black; scaly on older stems.

**Habit:** Damianita is a woody perennial subshrub spreading 1½ to 2½ (3½) in diameter composed of numerous slender upright 8½ to 10½ (16½) tall stems; the overall texture is medium to medium-fine.

**Cultural Requirements:** This slow growing species requires well drained soils in full to mostly sunny exposures, but is native to both acidic and alkaline soils; plants are highly drought and heat tolerant; irrigation and deadheading can improve flowering; periodic pruning may improve plant density and form, particularly when winter damage occurs.

**Pathological Problems:** *Chrysactinia mexicana* is prone to root rots on poorly drained soils and plants tend to languish in high humidity locations even on well drained sites.

**Ornamental Assets:** Damianita has an attractive cushion-shaped growth habit which is covered for an extended time in golden yellow flowers which are held above the foliage where they provide a strong display; reports indicate *C. mexicana* is not particularly palatable to deer.

**Limitations & Liabilities:** Plants truly thrive only in arid and semiarid regions where they are a mainstay in the landscape; stems are brittle, suffering physical damage rather easily.

**Landscape Utilization:** Massing; edging; naturalizing; low maintenance areas; bonsai; xeriscapes.

**Other Comments:** The genus name derives from the Greek words for golden (chrysos) flowers, while the specific epithet refers to this species’ Mexican range; Damianita was once considered to have various medicinal properties, including use as an aphrodisiac.

**Native Habitat:** Texas, New Mexico and Northern Mexico.

**Related Taxa:** Cultivar selection has been minimal within this species, but clones with improved flower size, number, or length of blooming season would be useful.

**Ericameria nauseosus** (P. von Pallas ex F. Pursh) G. Nesom & G. Baird

**Rabbitbush**

(*Chrysothamnus bigelovii*, *Chrysothamnus graveolens*, *Chrysothamnus nauseosus*, *Linosyris bigelovii*)

* C *Chrysothamnus nauseosus* is also known as Chamisa, Chamiso, Golden Rabbitbush, Gray Rabbitbush, Green Plume Rabbitbush or Rubber Rabbitbush; Rabbitbush is a semi-evergreen 3½
to 6\text{\textup{a}}ll mounded shrub with narrow gray-green aromatic leaves; woolly white hairs create a silver look to the stems; plant size is highly dependent upon water availability and soil fertility; plants are dusted with tiny showy fluffy yellow flowers in late summer to fall; a wispy windswept texture and fall flowers are the primary landscape assets.

\textbf{C} Although picturesque when well grown, plants may tend to become leggy, rangy and generally scraggly in appearance with excess irrigation or high fertility; moderately severe spring pruning may be required to restore canopy density; plants are native from Western Canada to Northern Mexico, hence with appropriate provenance selection, \textit{E. nauseosus} is useful in USDA zones 4 to 9; unfortunately plants do not age well in the landscape, often becoming liabilities with age.

\textbf{C} Rabbitbush is effective in transition landscapes where it thrives without much care and tends to remain more compact than in irrigated landscapes; plants act as good soil stabilizers and may be weedy where water is available; gall fly or wasp larvae may form galls; when numerous they should be removed to reduce infestations in surrounding plants.

\textbf{C} A smaller variant is sold under the name of Dwarf Chamisa which matures at 18\text{\textup{O}} to 24\text{\textup{O}} tall and spreads to 30\text{\textup{O}} or so; it is smaller, has lighter yellow flowers, blooms earlier, and has gray rather than silver stems compared to the species type.

\textbf{C} The genus name derives from the Greek words for heath (erica) and part (meris) in reference to the heather-like foliage; the specific epithet means nauseating, probably in reference to the strong scent of the foliage when crushed.

**References:** Enquist, 1987; Jones and Sacamano, 2000; Shay et al., 2003; West, 2000; Vines, 1960; Wasowski and Wasowski, 1997.

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