
Wildflower Spot – June 2013

John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

PINWEED

Lechea racemulosa

By Helen Hamilton, *Past-president of the John Clayton Chapter, VNPS*

These little plants are easily overlooked, but they grow in dry sites with few other plants. No more than 1 foot tall with stiff, wiry stems, the leaves on the stem are short and narrow. Late in the season, shoots are produced at the base with numerous crowded leaves. Blooming June through August, many tiny, 3-petaled red flowers with feathery red stigmas are open only on sunny mornings for a few hours. The flowers are followed by small red capsules twice as long as thick.

Pinweed is found in every county in Virginia and ranges from southeastern New York to Ontario, south to Georgia and Alabama, growing in dry soil in sandy, open woods and fields. Two other species with broader fruits grow in Virginia: Leggett's Pinweed (*L. pulchella*), in coastal counties and Piedmont, and Beach Pinweed (*L. maritima*), only in coastal areas, usually on dunes. Beach Pinweed is adapted to harsh conditions with tiny hairs on the leaves, which retard moisture loss and protect against solar radiation.



The common name comes from the small capsules that resemble the heads of tailor's pins. *Racemosus* is Latin for "full of clusters," referring to the fruits arranged in small racemes. ❖

Photo: Pinweed (*Lechea racemulosa*) taken by Phillip Merritt
For more information about native plants visit www.vnps.org.