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Croton texensis

[Synonyms : *Hendecandra texensis*]

SKUNKWEED is an annual. Native to southern North America it has tiny flowers.

It is also known as *Hasuski* (Zuni North American Indian), and Texas croton.

Warning – it can be poisonous for animals if inadvertently included in their feed. They would normally avoid it because of the disagreeable taste.

Texensis means ‘of or from Texas, USA’.

Skunkweed was familiar to various North American Indian tribes many of whom used it as a household insecticide. While the Hopi tribe recognized it as food for wild doves, small boys of the Oglala tribe adopted the plant as a headdress for their games, and some of the Navajo Indians smoked their clothes with it to destroy the smell of skunk.

Medicinally it had various uses. A decoction of the plant provided bath water for sick babies in the Pawnee tribe, and the Zuni, Hopi, Apache and Dakota Indians administered a skunkweed tea as a remedy for stomach upsets. The Hopi used the plant to make an eyewash and the Isleta Indians used skunkweed seeds (put inside the ears) to aid partial deafness. It was a remedy for both headaches and rheumatism for the Jemez Pueblo Indians of New Mexico, and apart from the foregoing the Zuni tribe used the plant to treat fluid retention and some venereal diseases. Some of the Keresan applied ground seeds to heal open sores – and according to records an infusion or decoction of the plant was taken by Apache, Keresan and Zuni Indians as a purgative (the Isleta tribe used a leaf infusion as a laxative and this may have been gentler in its action). Not least, from records, the Zuni medicine men must have been very strong minded as they chewed the fresh or dried root before sucking out the poison from a snake bite.