



(TOP) *Ericameria nauseosa*, [micheladelfia](#), some rights reserved, CC BY-NC 4.0, (MIDDLE) *Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus*, [geoskimom](#), some rights reserved, CC BY-NC 4.0, (BOTTOM) *Gutierrezia sarothrae*, [lisamason](#), some rights reserved, CC BY-NC 4.0

Rabbitbrush Roundup

Rabbitbrush are one of our most conspicuous fall flowering plants in the Denver metro area, but identifying among the different species can be a challenge. There are two species of rabbitbrush – *Ericameria nauseosa* (rubber rabbitbrush) and *Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus* (yellow rabbitbrush). Although rubber rabbitbrush and yellow rabbitbrush are both considered rabbitbrushes, they are now placed in two separate genera. Much of the confusion between the two comes from this previous assignment – the older name for *Ericameria nauseosa* was *Chrysothamnus nauseosus*. Additionally, both rabbitbrush species are sometimes confused with snakeweed, *Gutierrezia sarothrae*.

Rabbitbrush and snakeweed are all members of the Asteraceae (sunflower) family, and as such have flowers arranged in heads. Telling the three apart though is actually quite easy! *Ericameria nauseosa* is usually a large shrub, with straight leaves and heads comprised only of yellow “disk” flowers. *Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus* is far less common than rubber rabbitbrush and is easily

distinguished from the other two species by its twisted leaves. *Gutierrezia sarothrae* is a smaller shrubby plant, separated from both rabbitbrush species by the presence of yellow “ray” flowers in its heads (versus only disk flowers).

Rubber rabbitbrush is often used as a landscaping plant because of its drought tolerance and prolific floral displays. Its common name refers to the plant being a source a rubber (although extraction is too expensive to be competitive), and its scientific name references the sickening consequences of consuming the leaves. Rubber rabbitbrush synthesizes a variety of compounds (terpenoids) that make it distasteful to most herbivores.

Help Denver Botanic Gardens document the range of *Ericameria nauseosa*, *Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus* and *Gutierrezia sarothrae* by photographing these plants in the month of October. Post your findings to [iNaturalist](#) so they will be automatically added to the [Denver EcoFlora Project](#).

September EcoQuest Results – Blazingstar Bonanza

Eighty-four *Liatrix punctata* observations were made in the month of September! This was the only *Liatrix* species observed in the metro area. No *Liatrix ligulistylis* observations were made.

What is an EcoQuest?

EcoQuests are part of the Denver EcoFlora Project. These monthly quests challenge citizens to become citizen scientists and observe, study and conserve the native plants of the Denver – Boulder metro area via iNaturalist, an easy-to-use mobile app.

How Do I Get Started?

1. Download the iNaturalist app or register online at [iNaturalist.org](#).
2. Take photos of the plants in bloom that you find on your daily neighborhood walk. It is okay if they are weeds! Avoid taking photos of cultivated plants in gardens or in your home.

3. If you are concerned about revealing the location of sensitive plants or observations at your own house, you can hide the exact location from the public by changing the “geoprivacy” of the observation to “obscured.”
4. Post your findings on iNaturalist via the app.
5. Your observations will automatically be added to the Denver EcoFlora Project.
6. Sign up to be a member of the [Denver EcoFlora Project](#) on iNaturalist to receive updates and additional information.

What is the Goal?

The Denver EcoFlora Project is designed to meaningfully connect citizens with biodiversity and to assemble novel observations and data on the metro area’s flora to better inform policy decisions and conservation strategies.



Photo by Scott Dressel-Martin