

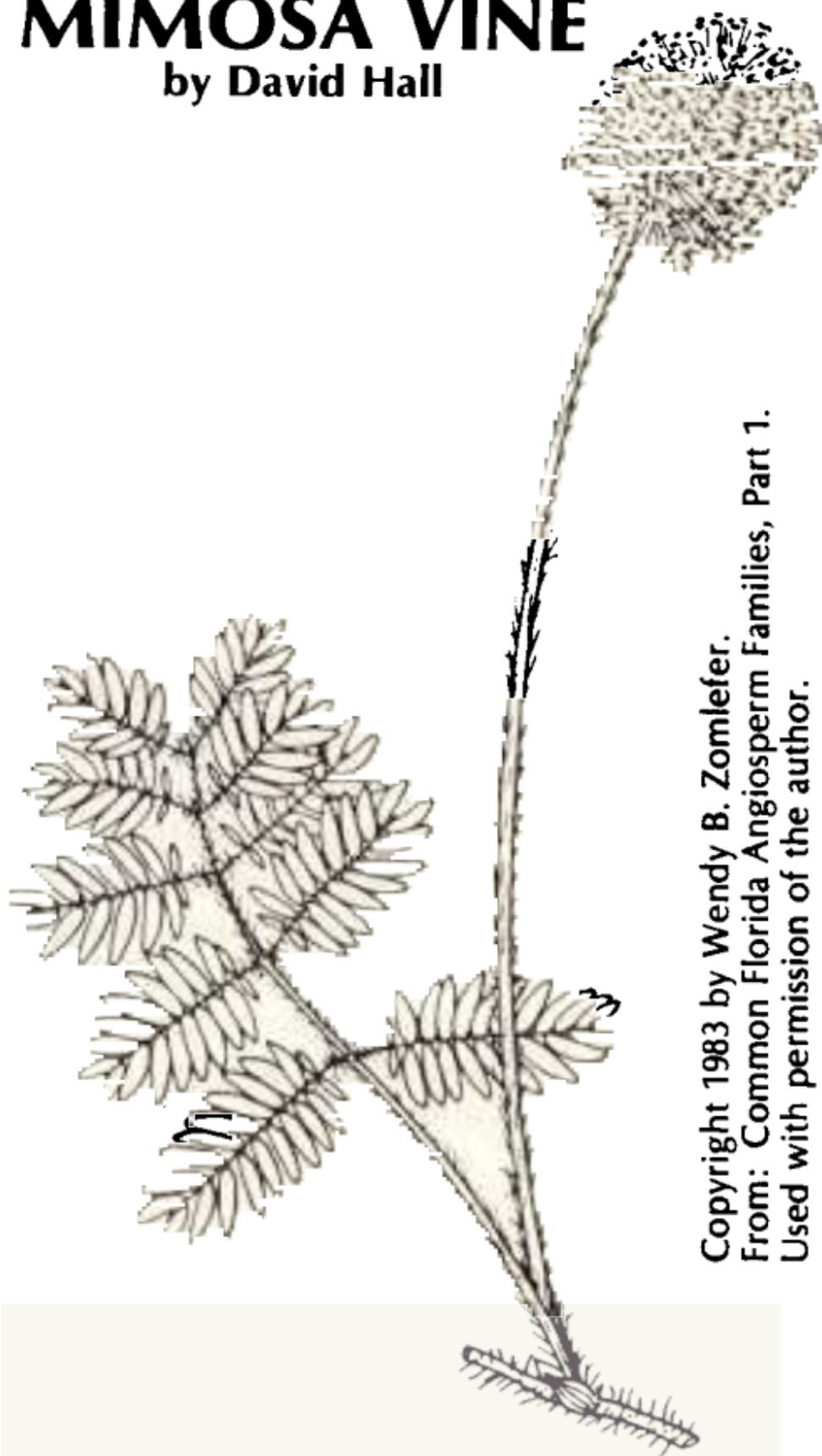


Mimosa Vine

The Joy of Weeds

MIMOSA VINE

by David Hall



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Mimosa vine, *Mimosa strigillosa* Torr. & Gray, is a woody creeping vine in the Bean Family with attractive pink flowers in the spring and occasionally again in the fall. The genus name, *Mimosa* is from the Greek and refers to the sensitive leaves of some species. The specific name, *strigillosa*, is from the Latin word *striga*, meaning short, stiff, appressed, bristle-like hairs.

This native plant ranges from the Everglades northwards into southeast Georgia across to southern Arkansas, Texas, and into the tropics. It grows along roadsides and in other disturbed areas, hammocks, pinelands, and bottomlands. It's rather inconspicuous, except when blooming, and is not at all frequent.

Mimosa vine can be used along margins, drives, or borders where a low plant is desired. It needs bright to broken sunlight. Frequently the vine is allowed to grow in lawns where it stands traffic rather well, but it does not make an effective ground cover. Since the plant is prostrate, only the leaves stick up, usually no more than 15cm (6"), so most of the year very little of it is seen or noticed. However, when the flower heads appear, the effect is most striking. A second

—Florida's Wildflowers

common name for the plant is due to the look of these flower heads on long stalks—baby's bath-brush.

This perennial vine creeps on the ground, rooting at the joints. The branched stems can be up to six feet long, but are usually no more than two to three feet in length. Leaves are two times compound having two to five branches (pinnae) with six to fifteen pairs of leaflets each. The individual leaflets are very small and usually are not more than 4mm long ($\frac{3}{16}$ "). The leaves lean up and out. The entire plant is covered with short, stiff hairs but they are not very prickly.

The pinkish to lavender flowers occur in globose to cylindrical heads that can be up to 2cm ($\frac{3}{4}$ ") wide. The heads are held above the plant on stalks that are 4 to 10cm ($1\frac{1}{2}$ " to 4") long. The flowers are quite small, about 2mm ($\frac{1}{16}$ ") long, with many pinkish stamens sticking out giving the head a fuzzy look. The fruits are small bean pods covered with stiff hairs. The pods appear to be divided into three joints when they ripen. Flowering is from April to July and occasionally again from October into December or until the first frost. Fruiting follows flowering with mature fruits found as early as May and as late as December. The fruits are considered poisonous to humans.

Propagation can be by seeds or cuttings. When obtaining cuttings a portion of the stem containing a few rooted joints should be taken. This can be done at any time of year but yields best results in cold weather. When planting, make sure soil is placed over a portion of the joints. The seeds usually need to have the outside layer (seed coat) broken or cracked before they will germinate. The most reliable method is to transplant. Almost any soil except the very wet or the very dry can be used.

Mimosa vine can be a valuable ornamental in an area where no maintenance is desired. It will withstand traffic well and acts as a soil binder. The delightful "baby's bath-brush" flower heads are a visual treat in the spring and fall. The large balls of pink to lavender flowers appear to come out of the ground when viewed from a distance.

If your landscape can use a low, inconspicuous vine which will provide a surprise for you in the spring and fall, plant this native.