

*Psilocarphus*  
*brevissimus* var. *brevissimus*

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Illustrator Linny Heagy



Photos by Jane Lancaster

## DWARF WOOLLY-HEADS

*Psilocarphus brevissimus* Nuttall var  
*brevissimus*

ASTER FAMILY (ASTERACEAE)

**Plants:** Low, woolly, taprooted annual plants, 2 – 10 cm tall, erect or frequently with prostrate branches near the base; dense, woolly, spherical flowering heads at the apex of the stems or in the leaf axils; leaves exceeding the flowering heads in length.

**Leaves:** Sessile, **opposite**, woolly, entire, linear or oblanceolate, 5-15mm long.

**Flowers:** **Spherical** flowering heads **6-9mm**, lacking involucre bracts and ray flowers; usually **densely woolly**; flowering and fruiting June - August in response to suitable moisture levels, including seasonal rainfall events.

**Fruits:** Single-seeded narrowly obovoid fruit (cypsela), 0.8-1.9mm long.



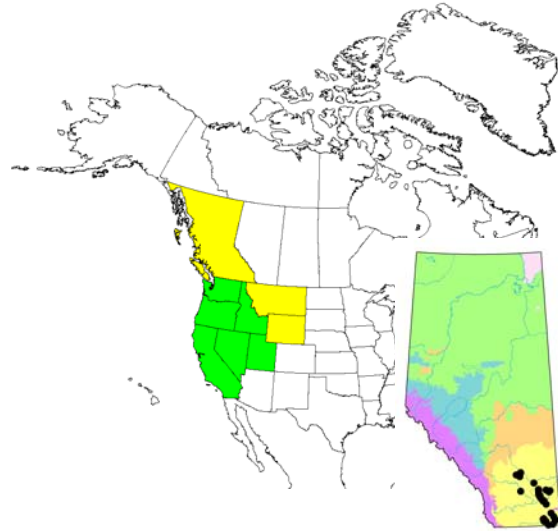
Image by Jane Lancaster

**Habitat:** Typically found on bare soils exposed by receding water in ephemeral and temporary ponds; in hummocky terrain characterized by brown, often solonchic, chernozems; parent materials, medium to moderately fine textured, moderately calcareous, slightly

saline till. Often found in wetlands where cattle grazing exposes mineral soil and reduces litter.

**Notes:**

1. Prairie populations have been reclassified from *Psilocarphus elatior* A. Gray (described in the ANPC book) to *Psilocarphus brevissimus* Nuttall var *brevissimus*.
2. May be mistaken for *Gnaphalium palustre*, which is also densely woolly and found in similar habitats, but *Psilocarphus* leaves are **opposite** where as those of *Gnaphalium* are alternate. Flower parts are also dissimilar.



**Synonyms:** *Psilocarphus globiferous* Nuttall (in part)

**References:**

Alberta Natural Heritage Information Centre, Parks Division, Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation, ANHIC Database – Element Occurrence Report. Data accessed March 13, 2009.

COSEWIC 2006b. COSEWIC Assessment and Update Status Report on the Dwarf Woolly-heads *Psilocarphus brevissimus* Southern Mountain Population and Prairie Population in Canada. Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Ottawa vi + 24 pp. ([www.sararegistry.gc.ca/status/status\\_e.cfm](http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca/status/status_e.cfm)).

Flora of North America (ed.). 2006. Flora of North America – North of Mexico. Volume 19: Magnoliophyta: Asteridae, part 6: Asteraceae part 1 Asterales part 1 (Aster order). Oxford University Press. New York, New York.