

Bidens pilosa

Hairy beggartick, Spanish needle

Bidens pilosa L.

Family: Asteraceae

Description: Erect annual herb, up to 6 ft tall. Leaves opposite, pinnate, 3–7 leaflets, leaflet margins serrate. Flowers with or without 5 white or yellowish trilobed ray petals, disks yellow. Fruits are achenes, dark, straight, 0.5 inches long, awns at tip; radiating out of flower heads, up to 6000 from a single plant, barbs allows seed to hitch on to clothing and fur of animals and feathers of birds. Historically, *Bidens* spp. have been used medicinally⁽⁴⁴⁾. Today, it is marketed as an herbal tea. [*B. alba* (L.) DC a close relative of *B. pilosa* and a more recent introduction to Hawai‘i, first collected in 1958, is spreading on Kaua‘i, O‘ahu, Maui, Kaho‘olawe, and Hawai‘i. It has larger flowers and thicker stems. *B. bipinnata* L. similar in appearance except for its bipinnate leaves⁽¹⁷⁾, occurs along Hienaloli Road, Kailua-Kona and along Ho‘okena Beach Road, South Kona]. Some 19 endemic species of *Bidens* evolved in Hawai‘i, probably from a single introduction of a *Bidens* hitching on to a bird. *Bidens*, two teeth, refers to the usually twin barbs at the tip of the achene; *pilosa* refers to soft hairs^(5, 70).

Distribution: Native to tropical America, common throughout tropics and subtropics. Introduced into Hawai‘i prior to 1845, now on all the main islands in mesic to humid areas⁽⁷⁰⁾.



Environmental impact: A weed of many crops and orchards. Threat of crossing with native *Bidens*. Spreads by “stickers” (achenes) adhering to clothing, fur, and feathers. Stickers also a nuisance to hikers, forest workers, and ranchers.

Management: Grazed by livestock. Sensitive to hormone-type herbicides.