

VARIATION IN *EVOLVULUS NUTTALLIANUS* (CONVOLVULACEAE) IN CENTRAL TEXAS

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ABSTRACT

The normally pubescent *Evolvulus nuttallianus* Schult. occurs with a purely glabrous form in northern Hays County, Texas. The origin of the glabrous form may be, in part, the result of its location at the eastern edge of this taxon. Both the glabrous and pubescent forms in northern Hays Co. share atypical ovate-lanceolate sepals, another feature known from the eastern edge of its range. A revised key for *Evolvulus* species in Texas is presented.

Strong pubescence has been noted as a key characteristic within the genus *Evolvulus* in Texas treatments, but especially for *E. nuttallianus* Schult. (syn. *E. pilosus* Nutt.). Common name epithets for this species include shaggy, silky, hairy, silver, and woolly. *Evolvulus nuttallianus* reaches the southeasternmost edge of its distribution in northern Hays County, Texas, near the eastern edge of the Edwards Plateau and west of the Balcones Escarpment (Map 1). *Evolvulus nuttallianus* is relatively rare in this area — the species is represented in TEX/LL herbaria by very few vouchers in this area: 5 in Travis County (most recent in 1950), 2 in Hays County (mine, 2003), 1 in Blanco County (1987), 1 in Bexar County (no date, no location). Recent sightings by Terri Siegenthaler and the author from western Travis County have been from the Shield Ranch and the Hamilton Pool Nature Preserve.

A population of ± 20 small plants, at least half of them lacking hairs, is found in northern Hays County on the private Purola Preserve and an adjacent ranch, on a high barren ridgetop in a sunny calcareous sandy opening in oak-juniper association. All parts (i.e., leaves, stems, sepals) of the glabrous plants lack hairs, and although small (less than 5–12 cm tall), even from a distance of several yards their glossy appearance is eye-catching (Figs. 1–5). These grow in close association with the pubescent plants (Fig. 2), but no intermediate forms occur. First noted in the 1990s, the glabrous population has persisted, surviving the exceptional droughts of 2006 and 2008.

The hairs of the pubescent plants are essentially the same as those found on *Evolvulus nuttallianus* elsewhere in Texas, certainly not smaller, although less dense (Figs. 6–8, Map 2).

Associated taxa at the Purola Preserve include *Evolvulus sericeus*, *Polygala lindheimeri*, *Chamaesyce fendleri*, *Hedeoma reverchonii* var. *reverchonii*, *Stenaria nigricans* var. *nigricans*, and *Schizachyrium scoparium*. No other populations of *E. nuttallianus* are known from the immediate vicinity. Voucher specimens of individuals from this site are deposited at TEX (*Harms 43-A*, glabrous, Figs. 9–10; *Harms 43*, pubescent, Fig. 11).

One atypical feature of both *Evolvulus nuttallianus* forms in northern Hays Co. is their ovate-lanceolate outer sepals (Fig. 4). This is also noted from other collections from the eastern edge of its range (Map 1). This contrasts with the typical lanceolate to narrowly lanceolate sepals found elsewhere, although similar to the ovate sepals of closely related *E. arenarius* on the Texas/New Mexico border (Harms 2014).

Although the origin of this glabrous form is not known, several factors seem relevant. First, *Evolvulus nuttallianus* is at the eastern edge of its range and relatively rare in this area. No other populations are known from the immediate vicinity. Second, a west-to-east clinal reduction of hair density occurs in *E. nuttallianus*, with the eastern populations (like this one) being the most sparsely pubescent (Map 2). Third, *E. sericeus*, with glabrous upper leaf surface and ovate sepals, occurs in the immediate vicinity of the glabrous population, and so the possibility of hybridization must be considered. Whether the glabrous form originated from a random single-gene mutation, hybridization, or chance allelic combinations, low population density and apparently relaxed selection for pubescence density probably are factors in its origin, persistence, or both.

Revised *Evolvulus* key for Texas

Current Texas keys rely heavily on pubescence, especially to distinguish *Evolvulus nuttallianus* and *E. sericeus*; e.g., Shinnars (1970); Diggs et al. (1999). Sepal form, following van Ooststroom (1934), is also used; e.g., Diggs et al. (1999); Austin (1998). In so far as possible I have avoided these differentiae, especially distinctions of hair habit and density.

1. Leaves with palmatipinnate venation (generally visible on some leaves without clearing); upper leaf surface glabrous with lower leaf surface pubescent, or both surfaces pubescent; phyllotaxis distichous ***Evolvulus sericeus***
1. Leaves with pinnate venation; both leaf surfaces pubescent or both glabrous; phyllotaxis distichous or pentastichous.
 2. Phyllotaxis distichous; inflorescence with peduncles >6 mm and few-flowered cymes ***Evolvulus alsinoides***
 2. Phyllotaxis pentastichous 2/5; inflorescence with peduncles <6 mm (rarely >0.5 mm) and solitary flowers.
 3. Foliage sparse with internodes commonly >4 mm; mid leaves linear, length/width ratio >8:1; trichomes asymmetrical with short forks <0.25 mm long ***Evolvulus arenarius***
 3. Foliage dense with internodes rarely >4 mm; mid leaves elliptical, length/width ratio <8:1; trichomes asymmetrical with short forks >0.25 mm long ***Evolvulus nuttallianus***

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Figure 1. *Evolvulus nuttallianus* glabrous with emerging small plants. 4 Jun 2014



Figure 2. Pubescent form on left; glabrous form on right. 2 May 2010.



Figure 3. Glabrous form detail (via dissecting microscope). 4 Jun 2014.



Figure 4. Ovate-lanceolate outer sepals; glabrous form on left.

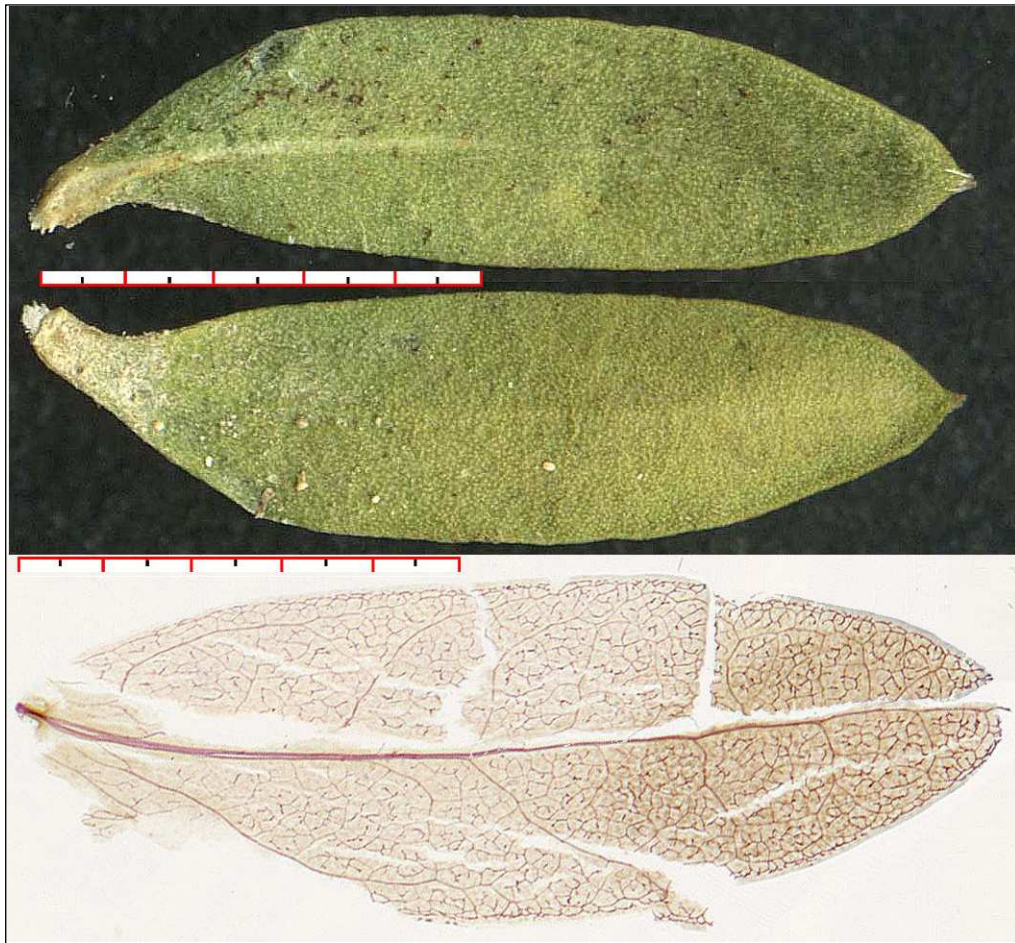


Figure 5. Glabrous form leaf scans (top); venation with cleared leaf (bottom).

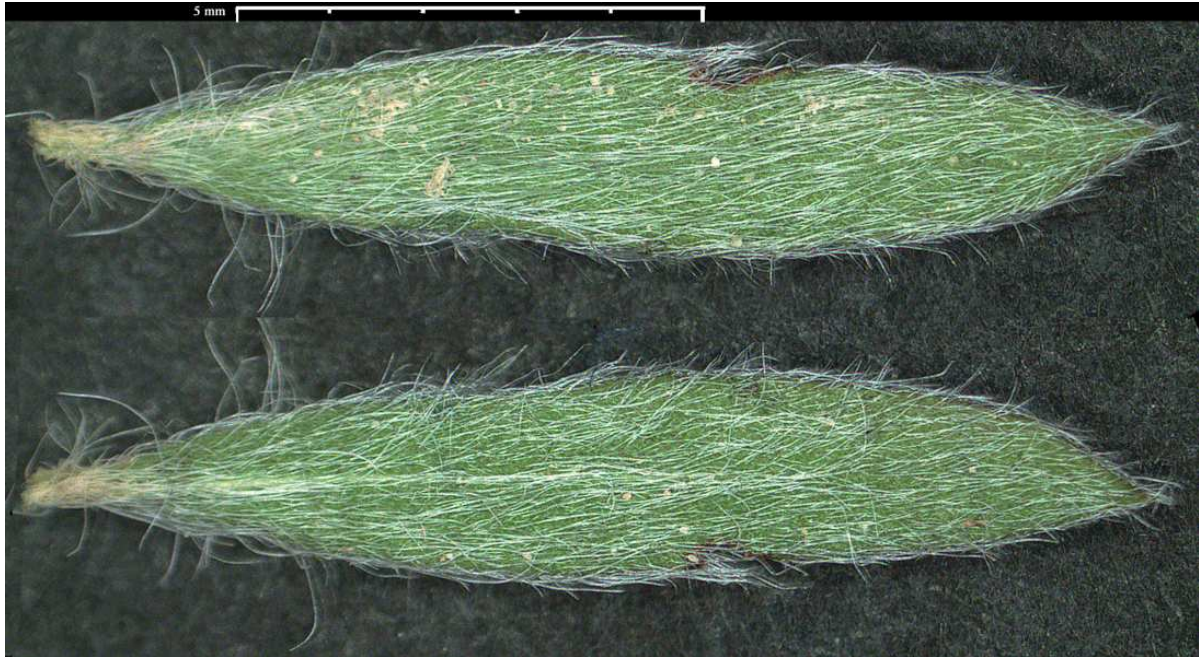


Figure 6. Pubescent form leaf scans.

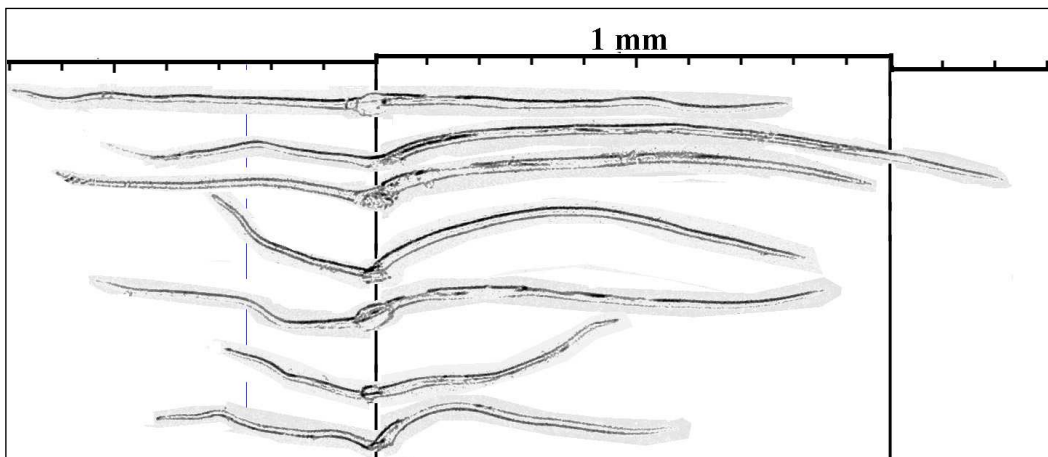


Figure 7. Typical hairs of pubescent form.

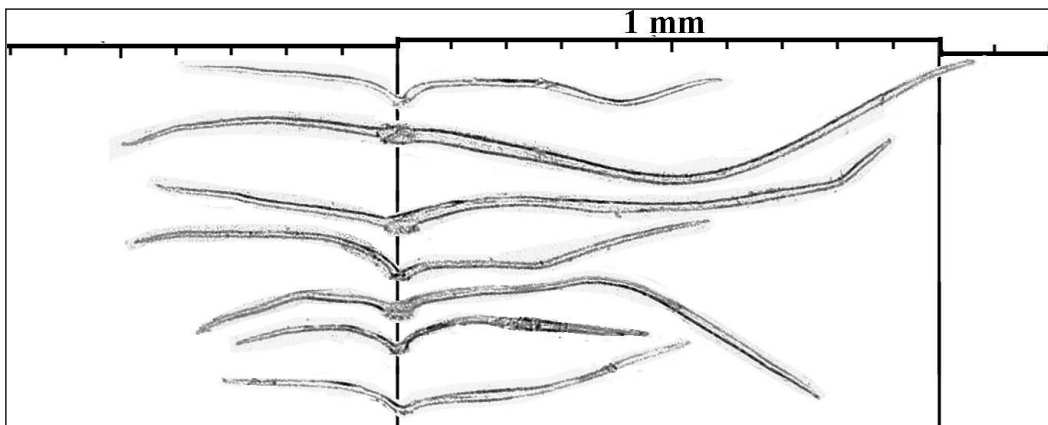


Figure 8. Typical hairs of *Evolvulus nuttallianus*, Culberson County (Trans-Pecos).

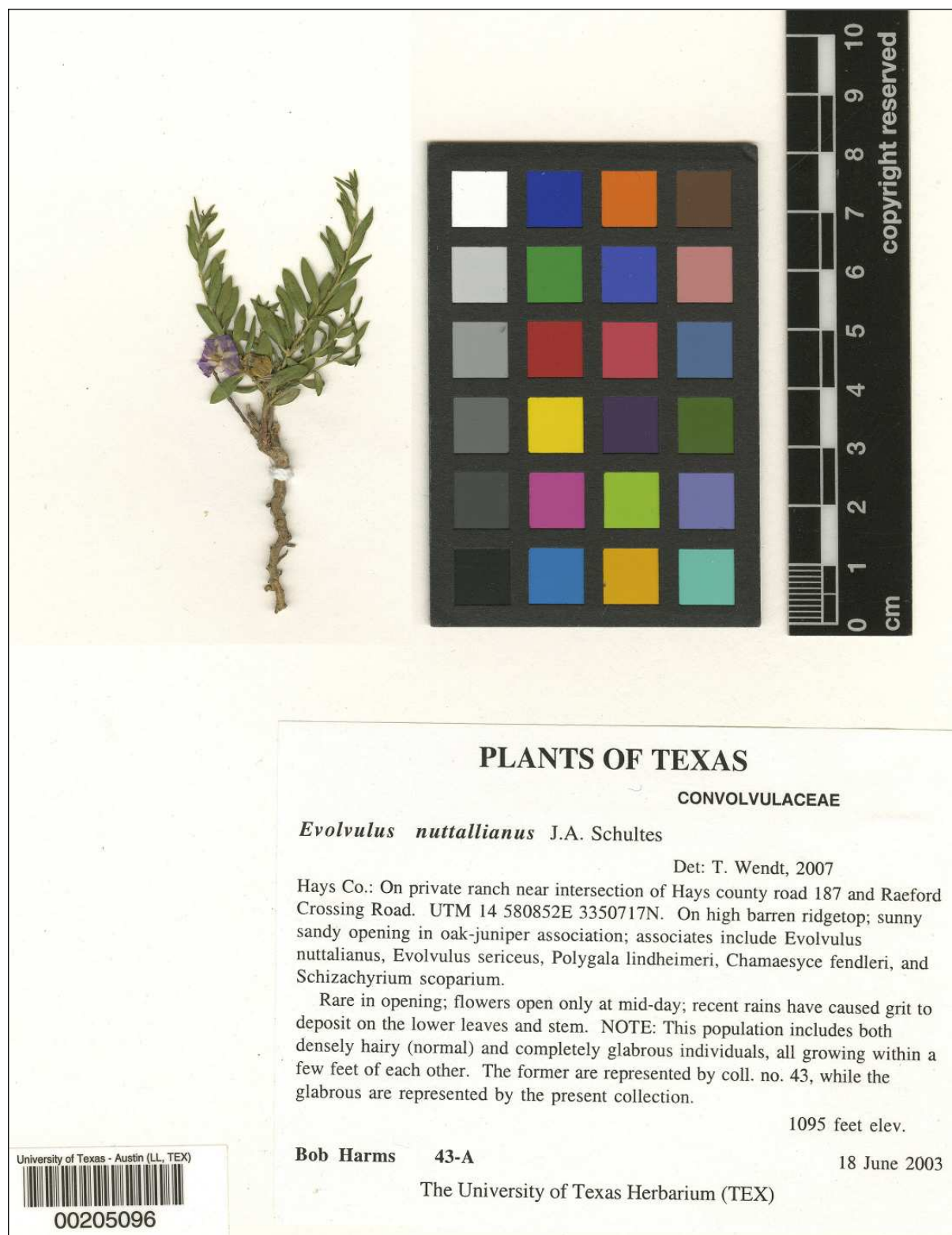


Figure 9. Glabrous *Evolvulus nuttallianus*, Harms 43-A [TEX], 18 Jun 2003 (cropped for figure display).



Figure 10. Glabrous *Evolvulus nuttallianus*, Harms 43-A [TEX], 18 Jun 2003 (scanned at 1200 dpi).

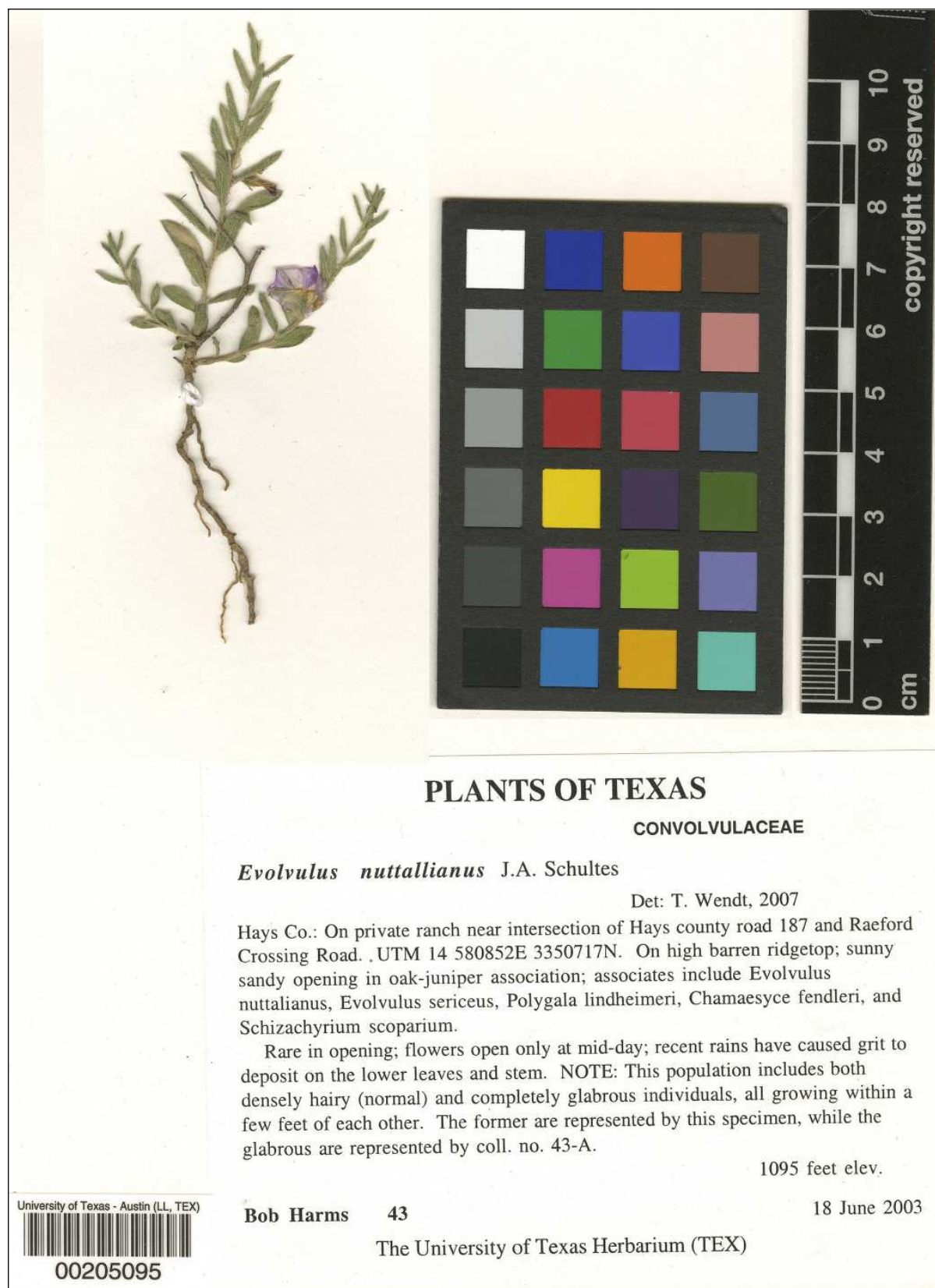
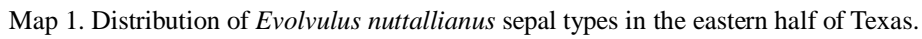
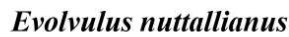


Figure 11. Pubescent *Evolvulus nuttallianus*, Harms 43 [TEX], 18 Jun 2003 (cropped for figure display).





Map 2. Leaf hair density for *Evolvulus nuttallianus* in Texas, based on collections at TEX/LL and SRSC. No collections exist for Jeff Davis and Val Verde Counties.