

## ***SANSEVIERIA HYACINTHOIDES* (AGAVACEAE) NATURALIZED IN TEXAS**

**JASON R. SINGHURST**  
Wildlife Diversity Program  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department  
4200 Smith School Road  
Austin, Texas 78744

**JEFFREY N. MINK**  
6412 May Drive  
Waco, Texas 76710  
jmink@mclennan.edu

**WALTER C. HOLMES**  
Department of Biology  
Baylor University  
Waco, Texas 76798-7388

### **ABSTRACT**

*Sansevieria hyacinthoides* is reported here as naturalized in Cameron and Hidalgo counties of the lower Río Grande Valley of far south Texas, where it has formed relatively dense, rhizomatous colonies along resacas. The species does not appear to present an invasive problem in Texas, possibly due to less than optimal moisture.

*Sansevieria hyacinthoides* (L.) Druce, a native of Mozambique, Namibia, and South Africa, is a commonly used ornamental in yards and greenhouses in warm climates. It regularly escapes and may spread by seeds and rhizomes and in discarded garden waste. The species was introduced to Florida in about 1800 as an ornamental and fiber crop (Brown 2013). It has also become naturalized in Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Australia. *Sansevieria* is placed in Agavaceae (Wunderlin 1998; Hess 2002) or in Dracaenaceae (IPNI 2016) or Asparagaceae (Tropicos 2016).

Based on the following specimens collected in Cameron and Hidalgo counties of the lower Rio Grande Valley of south Texas, we report *Sansevieria hyacinthoides* as new to the spontaneous flora of Texas. Common names of the species include bowstring hemp, snake plant, and mother-in-laws tongue.

**Texas.** Cameron Co.: 0.2 mi N of Texas Hwy 227 and Salida De Luma Ave. on Texas Hwy 227, W side of Texas Hwy 227, 8 Dec 2015, *Singhurst, Allen, Pons, and Rodriquez 21035* (BAYLU); Hidalgo Co.: Estero Llano Grande State Park, 0.3 mi S of jct of E Mile 5 North Rd. and FM 1015, E side of FM 1015, 14 Jan 2016, *Singhurst 21036* (BAYLU). Figures 1, 2.

The *Sansevieria* population in Cameron County consists of what appear to be several hundreds of individuals in the understory of native thorn scrub along a resaca ('dry river'), although it is difficult to determine what constitutes an individual plant. The underground system consists of fleshy rhizomes and fibrous roots that produce a dense groundcover that seemingly limits competition. Associated flora include *Ehretia anacua*, *Celtis laevigata*, *Celtis pallida*, *Forestiera angustifolia*, *Rivina humilis*, and *Malvaviscus arboreus* var. *drummondii*. The associated flora of the Hidalgo County population include *Ebenopsis ebano*, *Ehretia anacua*, *Guaiacum angustifolium*, *Karwinskia humboldtiana*, *Verbesina microptera*, *Rivina humilis*, and *Chiococca alba*.





Figure 1. *Sansevieria hyacinthoides*, Cameron Co., Texas. Photo by Jason Singhurst, 8 December 2015.



Figure 2. *Sansevieria hyacinthoides*, Cameron Co., Texas. Photo by Jason Singhurst, 8 December 2015.

The plants typically flower from December to June. The berry-like fruits are orange to reddish in color, about 6 mm in diameter, and contain 1–3 hard, globular seeds (Brown 2013). Fruit color seems to indicate, in our opinion, dissemination by birds.

*Sansevieria hyacinthoides* is naturalized in the southern tip of peninsular Florida (about 25° to about 29.5° north latitude), as determined from distribution map in Kartesz (2016). Brown (2013) reported that the plant has invasive qualities, which basically agrees with Wunderlin's (1998) statement that the species occurs in disturbed hammocks. The species occurs at similar latitudes in both Florida and Texas, but with the Texas occurrences limited to a narrow band near the Rio Grande River. While yearly average temperatures are nearly the same (about 23° C in the Texas locations, and 20–25° C in Florida) the major difference is annual precipitation. Florida averages about 157 cm per year in the south and about 120 cm for the northern occurrences in that state. Precipitation in the Texas areas of occurrence is about 70 cm for Cameron County (Brownsville) and 61 cm for Hidalgo County (Edinburg) (US Climate Data 2016). Lower precipitation in Texas may restrict *Sansevieria* to areas (such as resacas) where water may accumulate.

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