

partridge pea *Chamaechrista fasciculata*

Kingdom: Plantae

Division/Phylum: Magnoliophyta

Class: Magnoliopsida

Order: Rosales

Family: Caesalpiniaceae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

Partridge pea is also known as golden cassia. This plant is one of the few annual prairie herbs. Its upright stems are branched and may be hairy or smooth. Leaves are arranged alternately along the stem. These pinnately compound leaves are divided into 20 to 30 leaflets. Each leaflet is oblong to lance-shaped, rounded at the tip and asymmetrical at the base. The hairy or smooth leaflet has smooth edges. A leaflet may be up to three-fourths inch long. Flowers are borne on thin stalks, two to four per leaf axil. Each yellow flower may be up to one and one-half inches wide. Five petals are present, with three slightly smaller than the other two. The fruit is a narrow, flat, hairy pod, as much as two and one-half inches long. Partridge pea may attain a height of two feet.

BEHAVIORS

Partridge pea may be found throughout Illinois. It grows in prairies, old fields, open areas and along roads. Flowers are produced from July through September. The leaves are slightly sensitive to touch and may wilt or close when touched. Bees often utilize this plant as a food source. Seeds are eaten by birds, and several animals use the foliage for cover.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; edge; hill prairie; sand prairie

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