

SERIES: LEARN YOUR LICHENS

BERNARD DE VRIES

Scientific Name: *Caloplaca trachyphylla* (Tuck.) Zahlbr.

Common Name: Desert fire-dot lichen.

Synonym(s): None

Description: Desert fire-dot lichen is one of our most colourful lichens with its orange to reddish-orange body (thallus) on open grasslands. One of its characteristics besides its vivid colour are the lumpy and parallel radiating lobes with thick, convex, rough tips which can't be lifted from its substratum without damaging its lower surface (cortex). The centre consists of small often closely attached irregular structures. The many fruiting bodies (apothecia) are small and centrally located with a broad margin.

Habitat: On exposed rock in open grasslands.

Growth Form: Somewhat foliose (leaf-like) marginally, but centrally crustose (crust forming).

Provincial Status: A common temperate species of open grasslands.

Comments: This lichen can sometimes be seen with the gray and dense centrally located globose (sphere shaped) isidia (peg-like vegetative outgrowths) *Xanthoparmelia mexicana* (Salted rock-shield), especially in more arid locations (see insert). Desert fire-dot lichen resembles in many ways *Xanthoria elegans* (Elegant sunburst lichen), but this species has a more reddish colour and a lower cortex (protective layer) which can be lifted intact and has a broader distribution. Another species of mistaken identity can be *Caloplaca saxicola* (Smooth fire-dot lichen) which has shorter, smoother, lobes and occurs in the same habitat as Desert fire-dot lichen.

Note: This is the third in a series of our lichen flora, and the author hopes you enjoyed them and found it a learning experience. Please send comments to Bernard de Vries: bdevries@accesscomm.ca
(see inside front cover for colour photo)

