

Vegetation of Eroded Hillsides

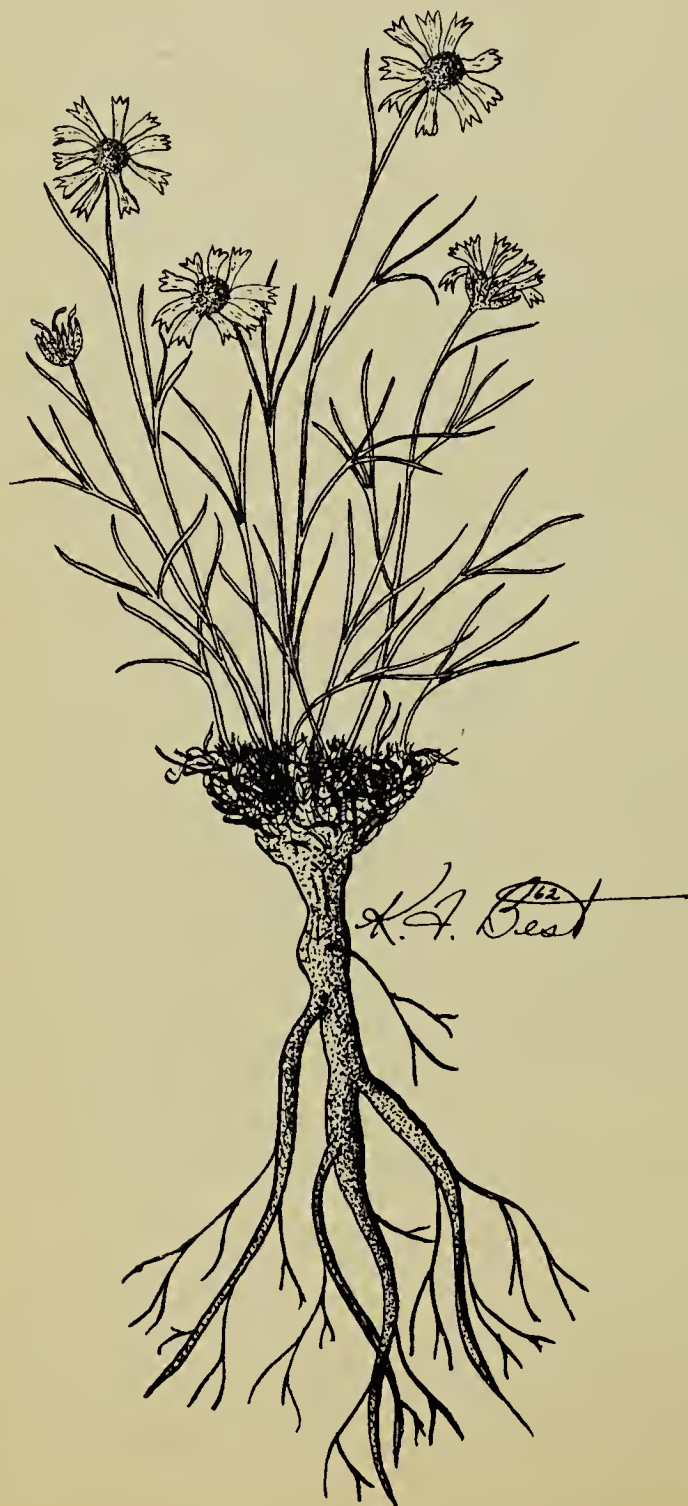
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Turning once again to the eroded areas in our series of prairie plants, we find two additional species which seem to thrive in these places of severe exposure.

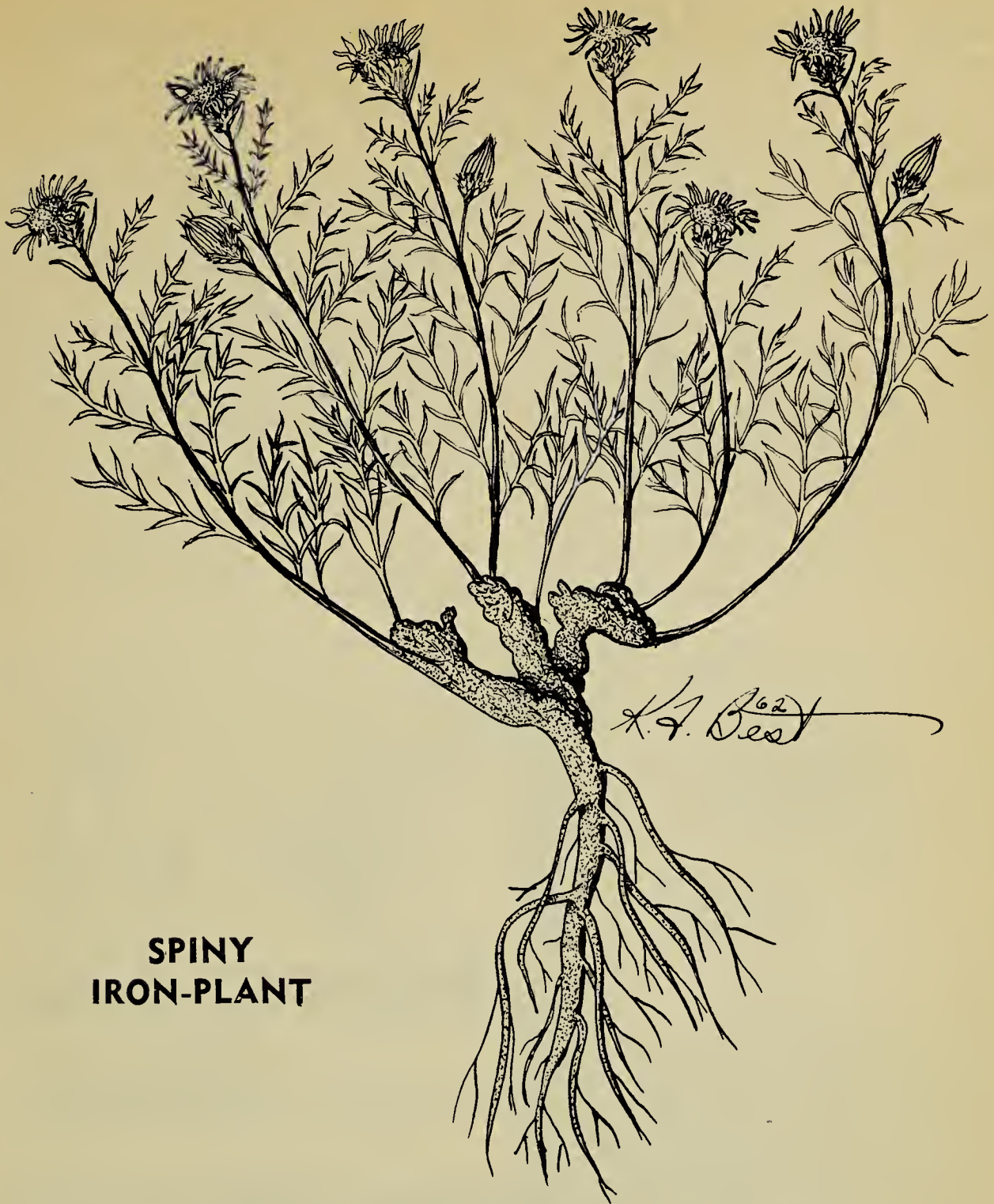
Colorado rubber-weed, or pingue (*Hymenoxys richardsonii*) is a green, leafy, tufted perennial with sunflower-like heads. Pingue, pronounced (peeng'gway), the widely established and generally used common name of this species, is a Spanish word meaning oily. This undoubtedly refers to the oily, resinous leaves of the plants. However, the rubberweed title is also appropriate as the plant

contains rubber latex, and grows abundantly over large areas in central and southern Colorado.

This perennial grows from, thick tap roots, which usually divide into a number of root crowns, each of which usually produces a more or less branched, leafy stem from 4 to 15 inches high. The root crowns are generally enlarged, and bear the old leaf bases from the previous year's growth. The crowns are covered with white or tawny woolly hairs. The leaves are mostly divided into 3 or 5 very narrow lobes. The numerous flower heads have bright yellow ray



**COLORADO
RUBBER-WEED**



SPINY IRON-PLANT

florets with orange veins and are about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in length.

Generally occurring on dry, sandy or gravelly eroded areas that are in full sunlight and free from competition, it is found from Saskatchewan, south to Texas and westward to California and Oregon.

Under normal conditions the rubberweed is not grazed by livestock, but under severe overgrazing conditions, it may be grazed by sheep, goats and to some extent by cattle despite its poisonous properties. Losses are more or less prevalent in late winter, early spring or at such times as before palatable forage growth has begun or where it has become exhausted by overgrazing.

It is interesting to note that the New Mexican Indians used the bark of the roots as a substitute for chewing gum.

Spiny iron-plant (*Haplopappus pinulosus*) is another plant frequently encountered on the dry eroded hillsides of the southern prairies. A much-branched perennial from 4-12 inches high, it grows from a thick woody root. The bluish-green leaves, from $\frac{1}{2}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length, are deeply separated into narrow segments with pointed teeth. The heads are numerous, yellow and $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inches across with narrow ray florets. This plant occurs on dry eroded hillsides across the southern prairies and south as far as Mexico. Flowering generally occurs from July to September.