

Finger-leaved Gourd

(Family Cucurbitaceae, *Cucurbita digitata*)

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These gourd producing vines have distinctly different leaves than those of the other two gourd producing vines found in SPRNCA. The leaves are grayish green and have central silvery white markings on the tops of the five narrow fingerlike segments of each leaf. The leaves are hairy beneath, and the segments have side lobes that vary in shape and size. The length of leaves, including stems, may be up to 10 inches. From approximately June to September Finger-leaved Gourds produce yellow star-shaped flowers that have 5 pointed lobes and are approximately 2 inches long. The flowers open for only a brief period before dawn, and people therefore do not often see them. Pollinated female flowers produce a smooth, dark green roundish gourd that has vertical, whitish stripes and blotches and is up to approximately 3 ½ inches in diameter. The gourd when fully mature becomes pale yellow in color. Finger-leaved Gourds are perennial, die back in the winter, and then grow back from the large root when weather becomes warmer.

Finger-leaved Gourds occur in sandy washes and dry plains and other places with loose dry soil. Their geographical range extends from California eastward into Arizona, New Mexico and Texas and southward into Sonora and Chihuahua of Mexico. In her 2006 analysis of the plants of SPRNCA, Makings reported the Finger-leaved Gourd as “occasional” in SPRNCA and as having been collected near Charleston Road. In 2007, I photographed them near a dirt road that led to the BLM Hereford Bridge parking lot on the south side of Hereford Road. They were in an area between N31° 26.273' W110° 06.600' and N31° 26.177' W110° 06.595'.

References

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Leaves of Finger-leaved Gourd. Arrow points to one of the 5 segments of a leaf.



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