UC SANTA CRUZ CAMPUS NATURAL RESERVE

SAN FRANCISCO POPCORN FLOWER

Lauren Rourk
Scientific Name: Plagiobothyrs diffusus
Common Name: San Francisco Popcorn Flower
Global Rarity: Critically Imperiled (Questionable taxonomy)
State listing: State Endangered, Critically Imperiled, CNPS 1B.1
UCSC Rarity: Rare

General Description
The San Francisco Popcorn Flower is an annual herb that is endemic to Central California. The species can be found during its blooming period from March or April to June, in the counties of Alameda, Santa Cruz, San Francisco, and San Mateo.

Geographic Range
The San Francisco Popcorn Flower can be found in the Central Coast and San Francisco Bay Area regions of California.

Identification
Height: 5-25 cm tall, spreading to ascending
Color: Petals are 2-5 mm, white with yellow appendages. Nutlets are 1-1.5 mm, ovate, more or less flat, and tan to gray
Characteristics: Strigose (covered with short, stiff hairs), leaves are cauline (grow on the upper stem)

Life History
Family: Boraginaceae (or Borage)
Lifeform: annual herb
Habitat: sparsely vegetated sites in coastal prairie, valley, or foothill grasslands
Blooming Period: March/April - June
Ecology: moist places, seeps
Elevation: 30-150 meters
### UCSC Distribution

The San Francisco Popcorn Flower currently occurs in at least two small populations in Upper Campus coastal prairie.

### Conservation Status

#### State Endangered

The San Francisco Popcorn Flower has been listed as State Endangered in California since September of 1979.

### Threats

#### Statewide

1. Development
2. Non-native plants
3. Grazing and vehicles

#### UCSC campus

1. Mountain biking traffic has heavily impacted the species’s presence in coastal prairie on the UCSC Upper Campus.

### Research Highlights and Fun Facts

The San Francisco Popcorn Flower is a moth host plant for *Ethmia plagiobothrae*, meaning it provides a site for these moths to lay their eggs and also acts as a food source for the growing caterpillar.

### Ways you can help

1. If mountain biking, avoid biking in areas where annual herbs and plants grow (i.e. avoid going off-trail)
2. If you see a San Francisco Popcorn Flower, do not pick or disturb the plant as it is at a very high risk of extinction.
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