

Focus on a Native – Indian Blanket



Indian Blanket (*Gaillardia pulchella*), also known as **Firewheel**, is a striking wildflower commonly found throughout the Texas Hill Country. This colorful annual belongs to the sunflower family (Asteraceae) and often forms brilliant swaths of red and yellow blooms that appear to blanket hillsides in spring and early summer. It thrives in full sun to partial shade and prefers calcareous soils with good drainage. Its natural range extends from western South Dakota through Kansas and Louisiana, westward to Colorado and Arizona, and south into Oaxaca, Mexico. In Texas, *Gaillardia pulchella* and *Gaillardia amblyodon* are the only annual species in the genus; other Texas species are perennial.

Indian Blanket forms a bushy plant typically reaching 1–2 feet in height. Each plant produces solitary flower heads about two inches across, borne on long stems. The ray flowers are typically red with yellow tips and have three lobes at their ends. Leaves are arranged alternately along the stem and may be lobed or coarsely toothed.



Propagation is easy from seed, and germination rates are generally high. Seeds can be sown in the fall and lightly raked into the soil to ensure good seed-to-soil contact. With adequate rainfall, germination usually occurs within two weeks, allowing seedlings to establish a strong root system before spring growth begins. If collecting seeds for future planting, allow the seed heads to dry completely before harvesting. Leaving the seed heads on the plant will often allow the plant to reseed naturally. Stored seeds can remain viable in the refrigerator for up to four years, and commercial seed sources are widely available.

Indian Blanket flowers provide a valuable nectar source for bees and butterflies and are moderately resistant to deer browsing.