

## Creeping Wood Sorrel, *Oxalis corniculata* L. Southern Yellow Wood Sorrel, *Oxalis florida* Salisb.<sup>1</sup>

David W. Hall, Vernon V. Vandiver and Brent A. Sellers<sup>2</sup>

### Classification

Common Name: Creeping Wood Sorrel

Scientific Name: *Oxalis corniculata* L.

Common Name: Southern Yellow Wood Sorrel

Scientific Name: *Oxalis florida* Salisb.

Family: Oxalidaceae, Wood Sorrel Family

### Seedling

The stem is short and pink-brown (Figure 1). The cotyledon blades are often tinged pink on the lower surface and joined near the base. The trifoliate leaves are alternate, with thin, heart-shaped, leaflet blades having a distinct apical indentation. The blades are smooth on the upper surface, slightly folded upward lengthwise along the major vein, and have a few appressed hairs along the veins on the lower surface and along the lower portion of the margins.



**Figure 1.** Seedling, Creeping Wood Sorrel, *Oxalis corniculata* L. Southern Yellow Wood Sorrel, *Oxalis florida* Salisb.

### Mature Plant

These Wood Sorrels can be annual (*Oxalis florida*) or perennial (*Oxalis corniculata*) tap rooted herbs, bushy or mat forming, and 0.1-0.5 m tall (Figure 2). Branching from the base and often rooted at the nodes, the upper portion is ascending or weakly erect, smooth or hairy. The leaves are arranged alternately along the stems. A single long stalk arises from the axils of the leaf, from which extend three flower stalks, each with a single flower. The flowers are 7-11 mm wide and have 5 yellow petals. The fruit

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is a capsule, 1-1.5 cm long, cylindrical, pointed apically, and 5-ridged in cross section. The seeds are oval in outline, apically rounded, basally pointed, flattened in cross section, light brown, and have a surface distinctly transversely ridged. To distinguish between the two species, look for stolons on the soil surface. Only *Oxalis corniculata* will have stolons.



**Figure 2.** Mature plant, Creeping Wood Sorrel, *Oxalis corniculata* L. Southern Yellow Wood Sorrel, *Oxalis florida* Salisb.

## History

The genus name *Oxalis* is a Greek word meaning sour. Sour refers to the acidic taste of the foliage. The Latin species name *corniculata* means horned and refers to the look of the fruits. The Latin species name *florida* means flowering.

## Habitat

These weeds are found throughout Florida. They are common in the southeastern United States; from Newfoundland to North Dakota; and southward to Mexico. *O. corniculata* is a cosmopolitan weed occurring in the Old World and in temperate and tropical regions of North, Central and South America and the West Indies.

## Biology

The foliage contains oxalic acid, which binds calcium leading to nutritional deficiencies in livestock and humans.