

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

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## 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.

## 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



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

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 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.

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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.