



See Mt News 28 April 1983

## Chia are familiar in Desert Foothills

White tidy-tips, *Layia glandulosa*. This is another of the many composites or daisy-like flowers found in the Desert Foothills. It is an annual usually about 10 or 12 inches tall, but may be several inches taller.

The brownish stems branch only in the inflorescence. The edges of the narrow leaves are toothed on the lower stem, but in the branched inflorescence become smaller and smooth edged. The head of flowers is one inch or often more in diameter, with the disk flowers yellow and the rather-wide rays are white and deeply three-lobed.

There are scattered short white hairs on stems, leaves and involucre. Also, on the involucre are some stiffer hairs, each bearing at its tip a tiny black gland. Tidy-tips is a Foothills flower preferring rocky slopes or mesa tops. It is more abundant than usual this spring.

Chia, *Salvia columbariae* belongs to the mint family. Chia plants are aromatic, have square stems and leaves opposite at the nodes, which is also true of most members of the mint family.



White Tidy Tip

Chia

Chia is an annual that, when growing under adverse conditions, may be only a few inches tall with one flowerhead, or when growing under optimum conditions may be 2 feet tall with several stems arising from the base and the inflorescence branching.

Leaves are rough-looking, hairy and deeply incised into several lobes. Most of the leaves are produced around the base of the plant. Flowers are numerous, forming compact heads that completely surround the stem. The stem may continue to grow upward through the first head and another head is formed. In vigorous plants a third head is common.

Each head is surrounded at the base by numerous bracts, each of which is spine-tipped, as are the lobes of the calyx of each flower. The small blue or violet two-lipped flowers have purple dots on the lower lip. They protrude from the head, only a few at a time so they are not showy, but the whole plant is attractive. The seeds of chia are edible and very nutritious.

The Indians prized them as food. Poultices and a beverage were also prepared from chia seeds. Some people in Mexico still use seeds of other similar *Salvia* plants and call them chia. Chia likes to grow best in sandy washes, but does persist to some degree on rocky slopes.

Wildflower hikes: Don't miss the last wildflower hike sponsored by the conservation committee. This hike will be conducted in a beautiful canyon off the road to Seven Springs. We will see many of the flowers which we have been featuring in this column, plus some new ones like the bush penstemon, Indian paintbrush and miner's lettuce.

This final hike will be Saturday, April 30. Meet at the Cave Creek School parking lot at 9:30 a.m. The hike will be easy.

