

# LOOK AGAIN !

Some of our most frustrating wildflower species are those bearing umbels of small yellow flowers and belonging to two genera in the Carrot Family (Apiaceae): Zizia, or Golden Alexanders, and Thaspium, known as Meadow Parsnips. Not only are there similar species within each genus, but some Zizias have a closer resemblance to certain Thaspiums than to others in their own genus, and vice versa.

Fortunately, all Zizias can be distinguished by the fact that the central floret in each umbellet is sessile, while in Thaspium all are stalked. This should suffice to separate Z. aptera and T. trifoliatum, both of which usually have long-stalked heart-shaped basal leaves and compound cauline leaves. (Typically, the latter has dark purple flowers, but the yellow-flowered var. flavum is even more common.

Three others normally have all of their leaves divided into three or more leaflets. T. barbinode is unique in having very small, stiff hairs at each of the upper nodes. These are lacking in Z. aurea (which has finely toothed foliage and umbels consisting of at least 10 primary rays) and Z. trifoliata (in which the leaflets are coarsely toothed and the rays are 10 or fewer).

A rarer species, T. pinnatifidum, cannot be mistaken for any of these, as its leaves are decomposed with the ultimate divisions no more than 1/8" wide, and the flowers are cream-colored.



T. TRIFOLIATUM

*Dick Smith*