

*Amaranthus* L. AMARANTH, PIGWEED

*Amaranthus blitoides* S. Watson, PROSTRATE PIGWEED, PROCUMBENT PIGWEED, PROSTRATE AMARANTH. Annual, taprooted, not rosetted, typically many-stemmed at base with numerous procumbent shoots radiating but not rooting, sometimes ascending but typically < 15 cm tall; monoecious; shoots 10–70 cm long, never spinescent, with dense foliage on axillary shoots. **Stems:** irregularly ridged, to 5 mm diameter, with 2 ridges descending from each leaf, green becoming tannish to reddish, often with whitish streaks ± straight on main axis, with short, colorless nonglandular hairs and sessile glandular hairs on younger growth, ± sandlike-papillate on older stems. **Leaves:** helically alternate, simple, petiolate, without stipules; petiole short–30 mm long, flared at base, whitish on margins; blade elliptic or obovate to oblong or ovate, 5–40 mm long, relatively small and folded upward on axillary shoots, bluish green, tapered at base, entire and white on margins, obtuse and with a short point to notched with a pointed extension of midrib at tip, pinnately veined with principal veins sunken on upper surface and whitish and raised veins on lower surface, glabrescent. **Inflorescence:** short, highly condensed cymes of unisexual flowers (cymules), axillary, spikelike throughout the plant, typically < 10 mm long, many-flowered, with sessile staminate flowers at base of cymule and more numerous pistillate flowers above on spikelike axes, bracteates, glabrous; bracts persistent along rachis, awl-shaped, 1–2(–3.5) mm long, short-pointed at tip but not spinescent, green with membranous margins; axes zigzagged when mature; bractlet (bracteole) subtending flower 1, resembling bract but smaller, ca. 60° alternate to bract, persistent on rachis. **Staminate flower:** radial, ca. 1 mm across; **tepals** (perianth parts) 3–5, equal, cupped-lanceolate, 1.5–2(–2.5) mm long, scarious-white with green midstripe, acuminate at tip; **stamens** 3–5, free, attached along margin of nectary; filaments 1.2–1.6 mm long, whitish; anthers dorsifixed, dithecal, linear, ± 1 mm long, pale yellow, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen yellow; **nectary** papillate; **pistil** absent. **Pistillate flower:** radial, ca. 1 mm across; **perianth (tepals)** 4–5, barely fused at base and persisting on fruit base, not spinescent, subequal, oblong or ovate, the longest sepal ca. 2 mm long and greenish, the shortest on the opposite side of pistil and narrower, ± colorless with faint green midstripe; **stamens** absent; **pistil** 1; ovary superior, compressed-ovoid, 1.5 mm long, green, 1-chambered with 1 ovule; styles (2–)3, ascending; stigmas papillate. **Fruit:** compressed utricle, dehiscent around circumference (circumscissile) with top easily separated as cap when touched, 1-seeded, surrounded by persistent calyx, readily abscising from plant, papery, light brown with persistent short-beaked styles, with thin, cobblestonelike wall. **Seed:** lenticular, 1.3–1.7 mm diameter, 1 mm thick, glossy black, smooth. Early June–early November.

Naturalized. A relatively common, often locally abundant, summertime annual weed of dry waste areas, especially along roadsides and around parking lots. *Amaranthus blitoides* typically is a dense-leaved, procumbent plant with stems arising at and radiating from the base in all directions. Like all species of amaranth, this is a rapidly growing C<sub>4</sub> species, and the blue-green blades have white margins. The pistillate flower readily forms a 1-seeded fruit, and so it is difficult to eliminate, but *A. blitoides* in range currently does not appear to be invasive in undisturbed localities.

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