

Ambrosia L. RAGWEED

Ambrosia psilostachya DC., WESTERN RAGWEED. Perennial herb, rhizomatous, fibrous-rooted, 1-stemmed at base from rhizome, branched above with ascending axillary shoots often terminating in inflorescence, erect, 50–140(–200) cm tall; monoecious; shoots gray-green to green, villous to short-hirsute and with scattered, colorless, short glandular hairs, aromatic; rhizome deep-seated, ascending. **Stems:** ± cylindric, < 7 mm diameter, light green and not striped, with nonglandular and glandular hairs. **Leaves:** ± opposite decussate below, helically alternate above, deeply pinnately lobed with 7 or more lobes, sessile to short-petiolate, without stipules; petiole absent or indistinct from blade, winged, < 3 mm long, flattened at base; blade ovate to lanceolate in outline, 20–130 × 10–70 mm, long-tapered to broadly tapered at base, acute at lobe tips and sometimes obtuse on terminal lobe, entire or with several coarse teeth on margins but commonly entire above midpoint on lateral lobes, pinnately veined, with ascending villous hairs. **Inflorescences:** unisexual heads in terminal racemelike arrays, of several(0) short, cymelike shoots at base having 3 or more pistillate heads and above axis with many alternate, nodding staminate heads, the pistillate portion to 50 mm long with ± sessile heads, the staminate portion 30–100 mm long with stalked heads, pistillate head 3 mm across and 1-flowered, staminate head discoid, 2.5–3.5 mm across and 6–16-flowered, bracteate, short-hairy and inconspicuously glandular-hairy. **Staminate head:** peduncle ascending to spreading, 0.5–2.5 mm long, pale green, soft-pubescent; **involucre** ± obliquely cup-shaped, 2–3 mm long, of fused phyllaries, green, the exposed lobes 3–7, unequal, with obscurely crenate lobes, the largest lobes sometimes with blackish midvein at least at base; receptacle with threadlike bractlets (paleae), as long as flower, colorless or with black midvein. **Pistillate head:** bract subtending cymelike shoot leaflike, to 30 mm long; first head subtended by 2 opposite, linear bracts, to 8 mm long, with a pair of secondary heads each subtended by 2 opposite bracts, 3-order or higher order heads sometimes present; **involucre** cup-shaped, ± 8 × 3 mm, of fused phyllaries, with 4–7 projections (tubercles) without sharp tips. **Staminate flower:** radial, < 2.5 mm long; **calyx (pappus)** absent; **corolla** 4–5-lobed, funnel-shaped, ± 1.3 mm long, translucent-white to tannish, with scattered glandular hairs; tube + throat ± 1 mm long; lobes deltate; **stamens** 4–5, fused to corolla at base of throat; filaments short; anthers fused into cylinder surrounding style, basifixed, dithecal, 0.8 mm long, > filament length, yellow, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen yellow; **pistil** absent. **Pistillate flower:** **calyx (pappus)** absent; **corolla** absent; **stamens** absent; **pistil** 1; ovary inferior, mushroom-shaped or acorn-shaped, ± 4 × 2.5 mm, the base inversely conic, ± 2 × 1.8 mm, greenish yellow, triangular in ×-section, the cap hemispheric, ± 2 × 2.5 mm, dark brown, 1-chambered with 1 ovule; style ± 2.5 mm long, 2-branched, the branches threadlike, becoming strongly reflexed. **Fruit:** cypsela, 1 embedded in a burlike involucre but cypselat loose within; bur inversely pear-shaped to top-shaped, 2–3.5 mm long (including beak), straw-colored to brownish, with 0–7 blunt, white, toothlike tubercles, sides veiny; cypsela obovoid, dark brown; beak conic, < 1 mm long, short-hirsute. Late July–mid-November.

Native. Herbaceous perennial commonly encountered throughout the range in full sun or partial sun, from coastal bluffs to all interior plant communities, especially in disturbed

soil. *Ambrosia psilostachya* forms colonies of varying heights from deep rhizomes, and is one of the few species that successfully flowers each year during dry summer months, when other species are severely water-stressed. Western ragweed forms long, terminal axes with many staminate heads with or without some pistillate heads at the base. The bur of this species contains only one fruit (seed), and this is the only ragweed species in range in which the bur is unarmed.

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