

Aphanes L. PARSELY PIERT

Aphanes occidentalis (Nutt.) Rydb., LADY'S MANTLE. Annual, weak-stemmed, fine-taprooted, 1–several-stemmed at base, decumbent to ascending, 2–10 cm tall; shoots to 200 mm long, sparsely pilose to villous. **Stems:** 5-ridged or 8-ridged, < 0.5 mm diameter, with ridges descending from each leaf, tan to whitish, internodes 10–20 mm long, pilose to villous or sparsely so; hollow. **Leaves:** helically alternate, palmately lobed, 5–10(–12) mm long, petiolate, with stipules; stipules 2, leaflike, fused to form stipular sheath, the sheath funnel-shaped, 3–4 mm long, 6–11-lobed, pubescent like blade; petiole fused with stipules for most or all of length, 1.5–2.5 mm long; blade fan-shaped, 4.5–8 × 4–8 mm, long-tapered at base, 3–5-cleft with 1–3 lobes per division, the sinuses of principal divisions 1.5–3.5 mm deep, acute to obtuse at lobe tip, 3-veined arising pseudopalmately from just above base, principal veins raised near base on lower surface, with soft appressed to ascending, long hairs mostly along veins and margins, upper surface veins obscure. **Inflorescence:** cyme, closed, axillary hidden by sheathing stipule, several–10-flowered, bracteate; bract subtending cyme or pedicel absent; pedicel slender, 0.2–2 mm long, flexible, whitish, villous; bracteoles typically 4, near rim of hypanthium alternate with sepals, triangular, 0.2 mm long. **Flower:** bisexual, radial, 0.5 mm across; hypanthium urn-shaped, at anthesis ± 1 mm long, faintly 8-ribbed from base, light green, hirsute; **sepals** 4, erect, acute, ca. 0.6 mm long, green with hairs > hypanthium, aging brown, persistent; **petals** absent; **stamen** 1, arising from rim of hypanthium, erect, ca. 0.3 mm long; filament minute; anther dithecal, tannish; pollen whitish; **pistil** 1, short-stalked (stipe), stipe ca. 0.25 mm long; ovary superior, compressed-ovoid; style arising from near ovary base, slender, 0.7 mm long, translucent aging tannish or light tannish green; stigma capitate, translucent aging reddish brown to yellowish tan. **Fruit:** achene, compressed-ovoid and somewhat asymmetric, ± 1 × 0.8 mm, thin-walled, glabrous, glossy, aging dull tannish, the pericarp somewhat sticking to the seed. **Seed:** compressed-ovoid, slightly smaller than fruit, whitish on surface, reddish interior visible at tip or above midpoint. Late February–early April.

Native. Inconspicuous annual of moist slopes on thin soil and typically growing with mosses and under the canopy of short annual grasses. *Aphanes occidentalis* is seldom observed because it is such a small plant, but on certain north-facing slopes may be found as dense mats. This species may be more common than herbarium records would indicate. The tiny, nonshowy flowers (< 1.5 mm long) that are hidden within the sheathing stipules probably are selfed; these lack petals and nectar, possess only one included stamen and one pistil, and always seem to successfully produce an achene.

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