

Calyptridium Nutt. PUSSYPAWS

Calyptridium monandrum Nutt., COMMON PUSSYPAWS, SANDCRESS. Annual, taprooted, rosetted, several-stemmed at base, with spreading branches to 22 cm long, in range prostrate and decumbent, < 5 cm tall; shoots somewhat fleshy, with basal leaves and cauline leaves, reddish to green, glabrous. **Stems:** cylindric, 1–2 mm diameter, somewhat swollen at the base of each principal, spreading shoot. **Leaves:** helically alternate, simple, petiolate (basal leaves) but sometimes indistinct from blade and sessile (cauline leaves), without stipules; petiole to 10 mm long, with membranous wings at base; blade spatulate to oblanceolate or obovate, 6–50 × 3.5–6 mm, often dull purplish or reddish, long-tapered at base, entire to subentire on margins, obtuse to rounded at tip, with an inconspicuous midrib somewhat raised on lower surface and with other principal veins sometimes slightly sunken on upper surface, wrinkled when water-stressed. **Inflorescence:** panicle of axillary cymes, terminal and axillary, each cyme 1-sided and often ± 10-flowered, flowers subsessile, bracteate, glabrous; bract subtending peduncle = cauline leaf; peduncle stemlike; bract subtending axillary cyme or panicle leaflike, spatulate or smaller and rhombic; axis of cyme ± deep rose; bractlet opposite flower, somewhat sheathing, ovate to awl-shaped, 0.7–1 mm long, green centrally with membranous margins, narrow at tip, persistent. **Flower:** bisexual, bilateral, in range 1.5 mm across; **sepals** 2, opposite, unequal, ± deltate with lower angles rounded, 0.9–1.2 mm long increasing slightly in fruit, length < width, inner sepal clasping ovary, the longer sepal partially enclosing inner one and ca. 1/3 larger, green with rose tip, membranous and somewhat jagged on margins, acute at tip, sepal next to stem somewhat pebbly, persistent and appressed to fruit base; **petals** 3, obovate to elliptic, in range 0.6–0.7 × 0.4–0.5 mm, whitish with some green near base, rounded at tip, sometimes persistent as a cap on fruit; **stamens** 1(–3), free, included; filament arising between 2 petals, 0.2 mm long, colorless; anther dorsifixed, dithecal, ca. 0.3 mm long, yellow, sacs unequal, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen pale yellow; **pistil** 1; ovary superior, lenticular, 0.4 mm long, green, 1-chambered with several ovules attached to base; style 0.5 mm long, green to reddish purple; stigmas 2, 0.2 mm long, translucent pale green to colorless, papillate. **Fruit:** capsule, dehiscent by 2 valves from tip downward, typically 2–5-seeded, oblong, 4.5–6 mm long, reddish, straight to arching, somewhat inflated, with seeds attached to base by long funiculi. **Seed:** lenticular, in range 0.5–0.7 mm, glossy black, smooth centrally and slightly bumpy along raphe. Early March–mid-April.

Native. A somewhat fleshy, rosetted annual occasionally seen in the open on sandy soils after burns or along the coastline, and only in certain years when rains are properly timed for its germination and survival. *Calyptridium monandrum* also is treated by others authors as *Cistanthe monandra* (Nutt.) Hershk., when that genus is more broadly defined. The plant has somewhat distinctive rosette leaves that are spatulate and often reddish or purplish. Flowers of this species are tiny and rarely seen open; typically there is only one stamen, which appears to be adequate for self pollination because fruits always have some seeds. The fruit of *Calyptridium monandrum* protrudes like a reddish candle from the appressed sepals at the base.

B. A. Prigge & A. C. Gibson