

*Cryptantha* G. Don POPCORNFLOWER

*Cryptantha micromeres* (A. Gray) Greene, MINUTE-FLOWERED POPCORNFLOWER, MINUTE-FLOWERED CRYPTANTHA. Annual, taprooted, rosetted when young, 1-stemmed at base, unbranched or branching from top node downward, the branches ascending and each with terminal inflorescence, erect, in range < 25 cm tall; shoots with basal leaves and cauline leaves, basal leaves dead at flowering, hirsute and not hispid, the hairs with persistent but inconspicuous bases, mostly < 1 mm long but some longer on basal leaves. **Stems:** cylindric, to 1 mm diameter, typically lacking ridges, green, ± glossy, with radiating, stiff hairs. **Leaves:** helically alternate (basal leaves opposite), simple, sessile, without stipules; blade ascending, linear-lanceolate to oblong or linear, 5–35 × 1.2–2 mm, entire, blunt-acute with a yellowish, calluslike point at tip, midrib only visible and conspicuously sunken on upper surface and raised on lower surface, stiff-hirsute with hairs often inclined but not truly strigose. **Inflorescence:** spikelike cyme and often in a terminal panicle of 2–3 cymes in forked array, each cyme 1-sided, to 55 mm long in fruit, to 25-flowered, buds and open flowers densely coiled at tip, flowers tiny, with 2-rows of flowers, flowers subsessile, lacking bracts, stiff-hairy with radiating hairs < 0.4 mm long (never strigose); peduncle of cyme cylindric, typically < 10 mm long in fruit; pedicel short, ca. 0.2 mm long in fruit. **Flower:** bisexual, radial, ca. 1 mm across; **calyx** 5-lobed; tube very short; lobes ± equal, lanceolate, 0.6–0.7 mm long increasing 2× in fruit, persistent, green, bristly, the radiating hairs to 0.75 mm long with most long hairs minutely hooked (uncinate), internally short-strigose approaching tip; **corolla** 5-lobed, short trumpet-shaped (short-salverform), white; tube initially somewhat barrel-shaped becoming stretched by developing fruits, ± 0.5 mm long, whitish; throat = tube, white, with 5 inconspicuous dimples opposite calyx lobes, internally lacking appendages; lobes rounded, 0.2–0.35 mm long, with overlapping margins; **stamens** 5, fused to corolla tube at midpoint, included; filaments minute, whitish; anthers dorsifixed, dithecal, ± 0.2 mm long, yellowish, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen pale yellow; **nectary disc** beneath ovary, obscure; **pistil** 1, included, ± 0.5 mm long; ovary superior, deeply 4-lobed, lobes ovoid, green, minutely papillate; style arising from ovary base in center of lobes, exposed portion ± 0.2 mm long, pale green, glabrous; stigma capitate. **Fruits:** nutlets, 4 (all maturing), erect, ovoid, 0.7–0.9 × 0.5–0.65 mm, < calyx, brown and somewhat glossy, lateral angles sharp at basal corners, inner face with groove open at base, of 3 nutlets outer face minutely bumpy, of the largest nutlet ± smooth below midpoint and inconspicuously bumpy above midpoint; style even to exceeding shorter nutlets ca. 0.2 mm. Mid-March–mid-May.

Native. Annual never abundant but found occasionally throughout the range in full sun, typically on recent burns. *Cryptantha micromeres* requires high magnification to examine carefully, because all of its interesting characteristics are minute. This species has the tiniest flowers of the family, and on that basis alone helps a person to key it out, but the traditional distinguishing feature is that it has four nutlets, three of which are notably minutely bumpy and the largest fourth nutlet is less bumpy and smooth at least below midpoint. Although not appreciated to date, this is the only local borage having hooked hairs on the calyx.

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