

*Euphorbia* L. SPURGE

*Euphorbia albomarginata* Torrey & A. Gray, RATTLESNAKE WEED. Perennial herb, taprooted, several-many-stemmed at base, mat-forming, branches diverging at 30–80° angle, prostrate, not rooting at nodes, typically < 3 cm tall; monoecious; shoots strongly 2-dimensional (plagiotropic) with zigzagged axes, glabrous, glaucous; latex white, copious. **Stems:** cylindrical, < 1.5 mm diameter, flexible, green becoming tannish or pinkish above, internodes 3–40 mm long, the nodes swollen but without any protuberances or adventitious roots. **Leaves:** opposite decussate, simple, short-petiolate, with stipules; “stipules” 2 per node, attached to node, 1 stipule = 2 fused across node on upper side and lower side, broadly ovate to deltate, 0.7–1.5 × 0.6–1.3 mm, white or sometimes tinged reddish and membranous, entire or typically irregularly incised, rounded or obtuse to acuminate at tip; petiole 0.5–0.8 mm long, curved to orient leaves horizontally, greenish aging pinkish; blade broadly ovate to oblong or roundish, 2–5.7 × 1.5–5.2 mm, oblique and rounded to truncate or slightly cordate at base, entire and often whitish becoming reddish on margins, broadly obtuse to rounded at tip, 3-veined, gray-green. **Inflorescence:** cyathium (= involucre with staminate flowers and 1 pistillate flower), axillary, solitary or in leafy cymelike arrays; peduncle 0.7–1.5 mm long; **cyathium** 1.7–4 mm wide (including spreading glands and appendages); **involucre** bell-shaped to inversely narrowly conic, 1–1.5 × 1.5–2 mm, green, with 5 bracts and 4 glands, the bracts of involucre fused most of length, oblanceolate with acute tips, the tips white and fringed to light pinkish on margins and below glands, the glands alternate with bracts (1 absent), nectar-producing, raised, transversely elliptic to oblong, 0.5–1 mm wide, fleshy, purplish red to burgundy (yellow-green), depressed in center, appendaged from just below gland, the appendage petal-like, fan-shaped, 0.4–1.7 mm long, > gland, white, entire to subcrenate or scalloped on outer margin; staminate flowers in range 15–20 in clusters of 3–4 flowers, each with pedicel-like stalk, each cluster associated with 1 bractlet; bractlet oblanceolate, ± 0.5 mm long, white, fringed, the pedicel ± 1 mm long, exerting flowers sequentially; pistillate flower. on a pedicel-like stalk (gynophore), at anthesis gynophore short and erect with only styles exposed, soon after gynophore elongating and becoming recurved with maturing ovary exerted. **Staminate flower:** reduced to 1 stamen; filaments < 0.2 mm long; anthers exerted sequentially to 3 mm beyond orifice, conspicuously dithecal, each sac spheroid, < 0.3 mm long, dark red to burgundy, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen golden yellow. **Pistillate flower:** ovary superior, 3-lobed broadly ovoid, ± 0.5 mm, light green with pink to rose edges, glabrous, 3-chambered, each chamber with 1 ovule; styles 3, 0.5–0.6 mm long, 2-branched below midpoint, the branches club-shaped, fleshy, white below and pink or reddish at tip; stigmas minute. **Fruit:** capsule, 3-seeded, 3-lobed and broadly triangular-ovoid, 1.7–2 mm long, glabrous, elastically dehiscent along septa and chambers into 6 dry valves (some valve-pairs remaining attached at base) and expelling seeds. **Seed:** quadrangular-oblong to ± lanceoloid, 1.3–1.6 × 0.6–0.8 mm, orangey brown beneath frosty-white epidermis, very finely textured (not smooth and shiny), grooved on obtuse lower ridge, acute on upper ridge, rounded on lateral angles, oily when poked. Early December–early August.

Native. A rarely encountered perennial spurge, often confused with other species. *Euphorbia albomarginata* is also known as *Chamaesyce albomarginata*. Like other chamaesyroid species, *E. albomarginata* forms a prostrate mat, but unlike *E. serpens*, the shoots do not form nodal roots. Most distinctive are the large stipules formed by fusion across the node. If that feature is not clear, to distinguish this species from *E. serpens* the observer must either recognize minor qualitative differences in blade shape, differences in branching angle, or numbers of staminate flowers, which are more numerous in the wider cyathia of *E. albomarginata*.

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