

Malacothamnus Greene BUSH MALLOW

Malacothamnus fasciculatus (Torrey & A. Gray) Greene var. *fasciculatus*, CHAPARRAL MALLOW. Shrub, with many spreading to ascending branches, in range < 400 cm tall; shoots densely stellate-pubescent, the pubescence initially silvery but becoming tannish. **Stems:** initially cylindrical, flexible but tough, tan or tawny with a tomentum of stellate hairs. **Leaves:** helically alternate, shallowly palmately 3-lobed or 5(7)-lobed (unlobed), petiolate, with stipules; stipules 2, fused to stem at node, deltate to narrowly triangular or awl-shaped, 1–2.5(–3.5) mm long, persistent or not; petiole ± cylindrical, 4–11.5 mm long, < 1/3 blade, densely stellate-hairy; blade ovate to pentagonal in outline, 9–75 × 9–58 mm, mostly cordate at base, crenate to dentate on margins, rounded (lateral lobes) or obtuse (central lobe) at tip, palmately veined with a principal vein to each lobe and raised on lower surface, upper surface visible through stellate hairs and somewhat green, lower surface silvery gray-green and densely stellate-pubescent. **Inflorescence:** panicle of numerous lateral cymes, terminal, many-flowered, near its base open with long internodes between cymes but above with denser flower clusters, flowers subsessile, bracteate, densely stellate-hairy; axes tough and flexible, tan; bract subtending lower lateral branchlet leaflike but smaller, becoming narrowly triangular and acuminate, ± 3 × 1.5 mm; pedicel at anthesis short–1 mm long; bracteoles 1–3, appearing like a calyx (epicalyx) around flower, linear, 1.5–4 × < 1 mm. **Flower:** bisexual, radial, 22–32 mm across, dish-shaped; **calyx** 5-lobed, (4–)5–6.5(–11) mm long, densely stellate-hairy, internally glabrous; tube bell-shaped, ≥ lobes; lobes ascending (spreading), triangular to triangular-ovate, 2–3(–8) × 2–3.5 mm, acute to abruptly acuminate or obtuse at tip; **petals** 5, attached to expanded base of staminal tube, asymmetric-obovate, (12–)13.5–14.5 × 9–11 mm, thick at narrowed base, lavender or pink-lavender to dark lavender or lilac, commonly darker above midpoint, glabrous except densely white-pubescent on margins at base, with raised veins; **stamens** > 60, monadelphous (all fused for part of length) forming a column and an erect array, 6.5–7.5 mm tall, glabrous; column 2–4 mm long below free filaments, white grading to pale lavender above or pale to light lavender, free portions spreading, ± 2 mm long, white becoming pinkish and lavender, lavender, or lavender mixed with deep purple; anthers in a terminal cluster, dorsifixed, monothecal (by reduction), crescent-shaped, 0.7–1 × 0.5 mm, purple to red or reddish orange, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen yellow-orange to orange; **pistil** 1; ovary superior, hidden beneath base of staminal column, wheel-shaped with conic beak, 1 mm long, green, glabrous below midpoint and with colorless stellate hairs on top, ± 10-chambered, each chamber with 1 ovule; style exerted but nested within anther cluster, 7.5–8 mm long, white at base to lavender and deep rose or purplish red at midpoint, with stellate hairs at base, branches = number of chambers, the branches arising below midpoint, ascending but crooked; stigmas minutely capitate, paler than style, densely and minutely papillate. **Fruit:** capsulelike schizocarp, dehiscent between ridges (indehiscent), initially wheel-like with low, central dome, typically separating into (7–)9–12 mericarps, intact 10–12 × < 4 mm, tannish, densely stellate-pubescent on tip and glabrous below; mericarps wedge-shaped in x-section, ± 3.8 mm tall, ± 2.5 mm deep (front to back), notched at base, 2–ridged on top, the lateral faces smooth or with 2 or 3 longitudinal wrinkles and paler than exposed faces. **Seed:** comma-shaped, 2–2.5 × 1.4–

1.8 mm, dark brown to blackish, gray-pubescent, the pubescence in a \pm polygonal pattern or restricted to irregular wrinkles on faces. January–December.

Native. Shrub common throughout the range in chaparral, often forming dense local populations in the transition between chaparral and more open vegetation. *Malacothamnus fasciculatus* is somewhat variable in having leaves of young plants and suckers much larger and more deeply lobed than the mature form, and individuals can range in flower color from pale to deep lavender, with purple pigmentation being increased in petals, filaments, style branches, and anthers. Chaparral mallow can be found in flower potentially any month when following a heavy rain event, and even in extremely dry years lacking spring precipitation this species can be found flowering from late May through July.

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